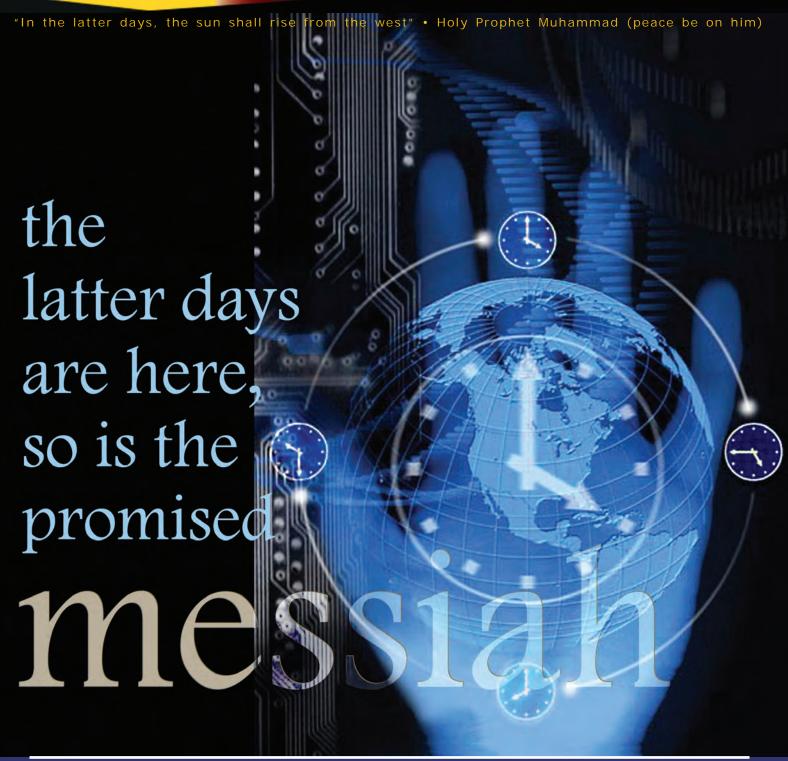
Muslim Sunrise



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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

he Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in over 178 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmadas proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: "The religion of the people of the right path" (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur'anic teaching: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

Editor

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Zia H. Shah Shazia Sohail Saad Ahmad Arif Humayun

Hasan Hakeem, Design/Layout Fateh Shams, Circulation

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer alaehis salaam or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, sallallaho alaehi wasallam or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by radhi-Allaho anhu/a or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her." While such salutations have been abbreviated in the text for readability (as, sa & ra respectively), we encourage all Muslims to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com

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لِبُ اللَّهِ التَّرْسُ الرَّبِي الرَّدِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Ch. 101, Verses 1:10

رسَمِواللهِ الرَّحُلَنِ الرَّحِيْوِ

الْقَارِعَةُ إِنَّمَا الْقَارِعَةُ إِنَّا الْرَّحِيْوِ

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In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

The Great Calamity!

What is the great calamity?

And what should make thee know what the Great Calamity is?

The day when men will be like scattered moths,

And the mountains will be like carded wool.

Then, as for him whose scales are heavy,

He will have a pleasant life.

But as for him whose scales are light,

Hell will be a nursing mother to him.

Opening Commentary

The Use of Force is Forbidden by Holy Qurán

he Holy Qur'an clearly forbids the use of force for the spread of the faith and directs its propagation through its inherent qualities and the good example of the Muslims. Do not be misled by the notion that in the beginning the Muslims were commanded to take up the sword. That sword was not taken up for the spread of the faith, but in self-defense against the enemies of Islam and for the purpose of establishing peace and security. It was no part of the purpose of taking it up to have recourse to coercion in the matter of faith (Sitarah Qaisariyyah, p. 16).

I do not know from where our opponents have gathered that Islam was spread by the sword. God has set forth clearly in the Holy Quran: "There shall be no compulsion in religion" (2:257). Then who has prescribed the use of force for the spread of the faith, and what force was available for the purpose? Do those people who are converted by force set such an example of sincerity and faith that without any kind of wages or compensation two or three hundred of them issue forth to oppose a force of thousands: or when their number reaches a thousand they vanquish hundreds of thousands? Is it the characteristic of the forcibly converted ones that in the defense of the faith they should offer themselves to be slaughtered like sheep and should testify to the truth of Islam with the

seal of their blood? Is it expected of them that they should be such lovers of Divine Unity that they should endure every hardship in their travels in the African desert and spread the message of Islam in those regions; or that they should similarly arrive in China, not as warriors but as dervishes and should so convey the message of



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

Islam that millions of people of that country should become Muslims; or that they should arrive in India clad in the roughest stuff and should win a great part of *Aryavart* to the allegiance of Islam; or should carry the credo, "There is no one worthy of worship except Allah", to the confines of Europe? Now say honestly whether these can be the achievements of those who are converted forcibly to Islam, so that they disbelieved in their hearts and professed Islam only by their tongues? Indeed not.

These are the achieve-

ments of those whose hearts are filled with the light of faith wherein God alone dwells (*Tiryaqul Qulub*, now printed in *Ruhani Khazain* London, 1984, Vol. 15, pp.51-

The Promised Messiah has come into the world so that he

should repel the notion of taking

up the sword in the name of

the faith, and that through his reasoning and arguments he should establish that Islam is a faith which does not at all need the help of the sword for the purpose of its propagation, but that the inherent qualities of its teaching and its verities, insights, reasons, proofs and the living support and signs of God Almighty and its inherent attractions are the factors that have throughout contributed to its progress and its propagation. Let all those who proclaim that Islam had been spread by the sword take note that their

need of any coercion for its propagation. Should anyone doubt this, let him come to me and stay with me for a while and observe for himself that Islam proves through reasoning and divine signs that it is a living faith. God Almighty now desires and has so determined that all such objections as have been raised against Islam by evilminded people should be effectively repelled. Those who allege that Islam was spread by the sword will now be put to shame.

claim is false. Islam is not in

(Malfoozat, Vol. IIL p. 176)

Editorial

rophecies concerning the "end times," or the "latter days" are present in all major religions of the world. Christians and Muslims in particular have had a considerable amount of discussion on such prophecies over hundreds of years. The latter days are the last 1,000 years of the 7,000 years cycle of the current human era according to the Ahmadiyya Muslim tradition.

The Bible has prophesied the appearance of Gog and Magog in the latter days as well as the Anti-Christ. Similarly, the Holy Qur'an prophesies about *Yajooj* and *Majooj* as the political and military powers appearing in the end times. At the same time, the powerful *Dajjal* was to appear in the religious arena, creating doubts and infidelity throughout the world. There is enormous discussion in the Islamic tradition about the signs of Dajjal and his donkey in Sunni as well as Shi'a literature.

In the latter part of the 19th century A.D. (13th century of Islamic calendar) scholars of both Christian and Muslim faiths started to express that the end times were showing their signs. Many organizations started to appear for recognizing the signs of the latter days and the appearance of the Messiah, who was to be the savior for mankind.

It is not the destruction, the wars, the earthquakes and anti-religious phenomena that need to be the focus when discussing the end times. They were just warnings of the time when the Messiah was to appear. These signs were to let us know to look for the savior, so that under his teachings and guidance humanity would manage through the evils of the end times and eventually create a harmonious, peaceful and unified worldwide society of human beings.

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, is the only person who claimed to be such a Messiah and was able to establish his community to begin the work of dismantling Yajooj, Majooj, as well as to dispel the influence of the demonic activities of Dajjal. He explained that his mission would be accomplished through prayers, discussions and exchange of ideas and not through the race of arms building and warfare.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} very clearly declared that no one would be able to defeat the Dajjal other than the Messiah. Christians and Muslims believe that only after this confrontation will peace on earth be established. Unless they look for the Messiah and pledge allegiance to his cause, and work under his guidance, their attempts to overpower the Anti-Christ or Dajjal would be fruitless.

Discussion of the end times needs to be formed through the accomplishment of establishing peace on earth. Hopefully, readers will study the articles in this issue with that perspective. It is crucial to have this understanding of the savior in the end times for our redemption from the evils which were forewarned hundreds of years ago. ◆

Note on the Spring 2007 article entitled, "The Second Coming"

The article mentioned that the eclipse of the sun and moon took place as the sign of the coming of the Messiah, as did Haley's comet.

The latter reference should have been made to the Great Comet of 1882 and not Haley's comet. It should be noted that the sign of the eclipse of the sun and the moon in the month of Ramadhan is the major sign for the appearance of the Messiah according to the Islamic traditions. However, other comets such as the Great Comet were additional signs according to the prophecies in the Bible. The Great Comet (the brightest comet ever seen and visible in daytime) appeared in 1882, the year in which Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be the Promised Messiah. It was an exceptional comet as mentioned in the following excerpt from the Space.com website.

We are thankful to Mr. Syed Tahir Ahmad (*Nazir Taleem* Rabwah) for bringing this to our attention.

"GREAT SEPTEMBER COMET OF 1882: This comet is perhaps the brightest comet that has ever been seen; a gigantic member of the Kreutz Sungrazing Group. First spotted as a bright zero-magnitude object by a group of Italian sailors in the Southern Hemisphere on Sept. 1, this comet brightened dramatically as it approached its rendezvous with the Sun. By the 14th, it became visible in broad daylight and when it arrived at perihelion on the 17th it passed at a distance of only 264,000-miles from the Sun's surface. On that day, some observers described the comet's silvery radiance as scarcely fainter than the limb of the Sun, suggesting a magnitude somewhere between -15 and -20! The following day, observers in Cordoba described the comet as a "blazing star" near the Sun. The nucleus also broke into at least four separate parts. In the days and weeks that followed, the comet became visible in the morning sky as an immense object sporting a brilliant tail. Today, some comet historians consider it as a "Super Comet," far above the run of even Great Comets."

(By Joe Rao SPACE.com Skywatching Columnist posted: 19 January 2007 06:15 am ETSpace.com)

he rapid and successful growth of the Muslim empires gave a false sense of security and accomplishment to the rulers and the clergy. They failed to think beyond the agrarian system while the Europeans undertook the arduous process of transforming their economy to an industrial based system - a process that took almost four centuries to unfold. This total economic transformation meant a slow but progressive substitution of their agrarian based system to an industrial based system. This change resulted in major dislocations in social and religious systems and intellectual outlook, challenging their traditions and established customs. During these difficult centuries of upheaval in Europe, the Muslim empires enjoyed considerable growth and ignored the major developments that ultimately challenged their "supremacy".

Does the Qur'an Sanction Theocracy?

By Arif Humayun
Part 2 of 2

After the West's startling rise to power, the Ottomans found that they could no longer fight as equals with the Europeans, who were creating an unprecedented society in world history. The Muslim empires were not able to effectively challenge that system and develop an successful alternative. The Ottoman Sultans tried to adapt, but their efforts were superficial. Sultan Selim III (ruled 1789-1807), for example, saw the Western threat in purely military terms. He opened a number of military schools with French instructors, where students became acquainted with European languages and Western books on mathematics, navigation, geography, and history. This superficial approach was not sufficient to contain the Western threat because the Europeans had evolved an entirely new way of life and thought and operated on entirely different norms. To be treated as equals, the Ottomans would have needed to evolve a new rational culture based on the spirit of Islamic teachings, dismantle the systems built on an agrarian economic model and evolve a new system based on an industrial model but using the same "Islamic" principles. The Muslim masses, whose minds and hearts were imbued with the conservative ethos, had to be persuaded to accept and understand the need for such radical changes which had taken the Europeans almost four hundred years to accomplish.

As already stated, the successes of the Ottoman empire which resulted from the adoption of astute political administration and the implementation of the "sharia law" became known as the Golden Period* of Muslim rule. Prior to and during this time, Muslim jurists were allowed to exercise their own judgment in order to resolve questions that arose in relation to theology and law for which neither the Qur'an nor established tradition had an

explicit answer - the Prophet's appointment of Ma'uz as governor is a good example of this practice. Towards the latter part of the Ottoman rule when the empire was in decline and faced the rising threats from Europe, attempts were made to conserve a tradition dating back to the early days of Islam that had almost been destroyed. Sunni Muslims believed that there was no need for further independent thought. The answers were all in place; the sharia was a fixed blueprint for society, and independent reasoning (ijtihad), that had driven earlier progress, was neither necessary nor desirable. Consequently, independent thinking was discouraged and it was declared that "the gates of ijtihad had closed [...] Muslims must imitate taglid (historical legal precedence) for resolving such matters.1 In hindsight, the termination of independent reasoning and consensus building on matters for which neither the Qur'an nor the Prophet's practices provided an answer, was the root cause of their decline. Paradoxically, these restrictions went against the very teachings of Islam.

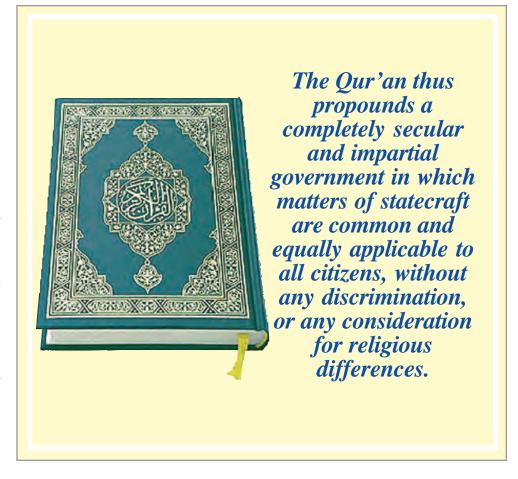
Unknown to these scholars and clergy, was that the industrial age would have required a new set of regulations to cater to the changing social and economic environment which could have been built on the same Islamic principles. The clergy refused to accept new knowledge based on secular law and failed to appreciate that the secular laws, were also based on the principles of equality and justice. In desperation, the clergy deemed anything Western, as un-Islamic and even preached against learning Western languages.

Even today, the clergy vehemently proclaims that adopting seventh century practices will help Muslims extricate themselves from the current hopeless situation. Little do these people realize that the seventh century practices can only be adopted as rituals because the human intellect is much advanced now and would have to deny modern developments and knowledge, which are the gifts of nature; their denial is contrary to the Qur'anic assertion to seek knowledge and use it for the beneficence of fellow human beings.

Forms of Government mentioned in Qur'an

As stated earlier, the Qur'an only enunciates fundamental principles for good governance and does not prefer any particular form of government. As a universal religion, Islam can not recommend a single system of government without due regard to the fact, that it is not practically possible for a single system to be applicable to all regions and all societies for all times. That decision is to be made by the people based on historically established traditions prevailing in their country. What the Qur'an emphasizes is not the form of government but how the government should discharge itself. Governments must be responsible for the people's welfare, assuring the availability of basic necessities, guaranteeing fundamental human rights and establishing a just society where people can live in peace without discrimination, as stated earlier. Any system e.g., democracy, monarchy, etc., can be accommodated under Islam, if it "discharges the trust owed to the subjects". The weaknesses and strengths of current systems (democracies, monarchies, and dictatorships, etc.), and the negative influences of corruption, pressure groups, etc. have undermined most prevalent systems. These factors are however, not discussed here. Suffice it to say that democracy has not developed enough, even in the most advanced nations, to reach the stage of its ultimate political vision.

"The Qur'an does speak of a democratic system where the rulers can be elected by the people and affairs settled by mutual consultation. The Qur'an's definition of democracy is based on the four fundamental principles, as listed in earlier section titled "Qur'anic Teachings on Statecraft": (1) elections must be based on trust and integrity; (2) governments must function on the principle of absolute justice; (3) decisions, in matters of government, are made through mutual



consultation; (4) to make over the trusts to those best fitted to discharge them. Interestingly, the last two requirements can be loosely related to Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as being "by the people" and "for the people". However, the Qur'an places the responsibility for exercising the right to choose leaders on each individual who, as a trustee must discharge his trust honestly, as he is answerable to God. This would ensure that leaders are elected based on their integrity and piety and not on partisan politics."²

The Qur'an thus propounds a completely secular and impartial government in which matters of statecraft are common and equally applicable to all citizens, without any discrimination, or any consideration for religious differences. Essentially, this would isolate any government decisions to be influenced by religious considerations thereby separating the government from religion. The Qur'an admonishes Muslims to follow the rule of law in worldly affairs, to not create any disruption in society, and prohibits state interference in matters of faith. It allows total freedom of belief and profession of

faith as that is a personal matter between humans and the Divine. Freedom of religion is a fundamental and inalienable human right and people can believe in, or worship, anything they please.

Practical Experience of "Sharia" Implementation in Muslim Countries:

In contravention of Qur'anic injunctions, the past century has seen several failed experiments of defining and implementing "Islamic Law" in so-called Muslim countries. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran are the famous recent examples, still fresh in our memories.

Pakistan was partitioned from India in 1947 through a constitutional change. Ironically, this constitutionally founded state was unable to write its own constitution till after several decades of independence; the first popularly drafted constitution was adopted in 1973. The clergy's demands for Islamization prevented the country from being developed as a progressive secular country where all citizens enjoyed equal rights, without

any discrimination, as declared by the founder, Mr. M.A. Jinnah. It must be stated for the record that the clergy in undivided India opposed the creation of Pakistan and, later came to Pakistan after disbanding themselves as a lost political movement. In their attempts to reestablish themselves and justify their existence, they required a cause to rally around.3, 4 Demands for Islamization gave them that anchor. Initially they thwarted the first Constituent Assembly's efforts to draft the constitution by declaring that all sovereignty belongs to God and the government can not be sovereign. This created ripples of uncertainty, instability and confusion for which successive governments required the clergy's support for governance. Later, the clergy demanded that Pakistan's first Foreign Minister, Zafrulla Khan, be dismissed as he belonged to a progressive Islamic movement which challenged their hegemony over religious matters. Unable to intellectually deal with the challenge to their orthodoxy, the clergy in Pakistan wanted the state to declare Ahmadi Muslims as non Muslims so its adherents could be killed for apostasy an untenable, clergy defined position, in direct contravention of the Qur'anic teaching of no compulsion in religion. A brief description of this convoluted demand will be helpful in understanding their mischievous mindset. Although the clergy agrees that there is no compulsion in religion and welcomes anyone to become a Muslim, they argue that after accepting Islam, a Muslim can not change to any other religion. If they do, they should either leave that "Muslim state" or be killed. According to the clergy, while there is total freedom for non-Muslims accepting Islam, that freedom is denied to Muslims, thus making it a one way street!

The clergy-led riots of 1953 to declare Ahmadi Muslims as non-Muslims resulted in the imposition of the first martial law in parts of the country⁵. An excellent account of the causes of this rioting is presented elsewhere⁶, (which sadly the clergy is still using to gain control of Muslim societies in other countries). The overall effect was the weakening and destabilization of the civil governments and the ultimate military takeovers beginning in 1957. Since then, Pakistan has gone from one military dictatorship to the other

and the civil administration has never been able to effectively run the affairs of the country. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, (the Pakistani Prime Minister from 1971-77), in the last stages of his desperate attempts to hang on to power after widespread electoral manipulations, wanted the clergy's support to remain in power. To appease them, he accepted their indefensible demand and amended the 1973 constitution to declare Ahmadi Muslims as a non-Muslim minority. Again, in total contravention of Qur'anic and secular laws, (The Universal Human Rights Declaration to which Pakistan is a signatory), Bhutto disenfranchised minorities from equal participation in elections and introduced a separate electorate system for all minorities.

Under General Zia- ul- Haque's despotic dictatorship (1977-1988), the clergy was further patronized, especially after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Clergy led madrassas, funded primarily by Saudi Arabia were established where young men were indoctrinate to launch jihad against the infidel. These indoctrinated jihadis were armed and trained by the US to expel the Russians from Afghanistan.7 Through an Ordinance, Gen Zia- ul- Haque defined the Muslim faith and implemented policies to Islamize Pakistan by implementing the so-called sharia law, introduced public floggings and hangings and the establishment of a Federal Shariat Court. This lopsided sharia required rape victims to produce four male witnesses to prove their allegation. This unreal requirement could obviously not be fulfilled by the victims who were then charged with adultery and subjected to severe prison terms. Fortunately, Pakistan's Council of Islamic Ideology rescinded this law in 20078 after its disastrous affects became obvious to the world.9 The Federal Shariat Court is tantamount to a parallel judicial system to the secular courts and could conceivably undermine the legal authority of the country's Supreme Court.

Without doubt, the radicalization and *Talibanization* of the Pakistani society is obvious – and growing – in spite of Gen Musharraf's best efforts to reverse it. The country is a fertile breeding ground for terrorists from around the world. By its own admission, Pakistan has captured the most terrorists and lost more than 700 men in action against them on

Pakistani soil. Although meant to support its position as a leading ally of the US War on Terror, this acknowledgement confirms that Pakistan is indeed a hub for terrorists. The current events in the capital, Islamabad, where the Government demolished seven illegally built mosques on encroached government property, resulted in male and female radicals kidnapping people, illegally occupying a children's library, burning down businesses selling music, and threatening the enforcement of their own sharia, is critically alarming. And the government's total capitulation to these blatantly illegal activities is even more frightening.10 Contrasting with India that also became independent at the same time and was faced with similar problems, it is safe to say Islamization has taken Pakistan backwards; it is counted among states on the brink of disaster.

The destructive affect of Islamization of Afghanistan by the Taliban, after the Soviet withdrawal, needs no further explanation. The country is a total basket case where corruption, terrorism, opium cultivation, revenge killing and kidnapping for ransom, etc. are the norms.

The Iranian revolution that brought the Shi'a clergy to power, has also failed to deliver. In spite of being a regional power of great economic potential with significant oil and gas reserves, Iran has failed to modernize and is sliding towards radicalism.

Saudi Arabia has followed the Ottoman model for relying on the clergy to legitimize their rule. The Wahabi brand of Islam, developed by Abd-al-Wahab (1703-1792) after breaking away from Ottomans, declared the Ottoman sultan apostate and their sharia inauthentic. He called for the return to the pristine practice of Islam by the first community in seventh century Arabia. Later, under a political arrangement, the Wahabi movement became the legitimizing force for the current Saudi Arabian government, much like the clerics in the Ottoman empire. Saudi Arabia's failure to develop as an economic, political and military power, despite having the world's largest oil and gas resources and being home to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, clearly demonstrates the disastrous consequences of combining religion and government. Common people have no freedoms and rights in this country. Migrant workers are exploited and discrimination is rampant. Three pay scales exist for the same job, depending on the person's nationality and ethnicity, with the Americans and Saudis getting the highest rates. This discrimination is absolutely contrary to the Qur'anic teachings of equality and justice. The fact that virtually all September 11 hijackers and the al-Qaeda founder were Saudi citizens, speaks volumes of the Islamic training provided by the Wahabi strain.

The above botched examples of integrating Islam with politics, can be contrasted with a successful system within the Muslim world where religion is not driving politics. That microcosm of successfully separating Islam from politics stands out as an island of hope within the Muslim world. Dubai (UAE) provides that example where, under an overwhelming Islamic framework, people have the right to choose and practice their religion privately and are free to live according to their wishes, without state interference. There are no sharia courts, no public floggings, beheadings, and no amputation of limbs, yet the system is free from major crime and the diversity of its population is contributing to enriching its culture, economy and social progress. Dubai can rightfully boast that it hosts the most nationalities and religions, living and working together peacefully; the state ensures them the most freedoms of any country in the Arab or Muslim world. Religion is a private matter in this benevolent monarchy which is governed by secular law, where all citizens enjoy equal rights. The widespread prosperity, diversity and business growth in this desert state with very little oil resources, confirm the benefits of separating religion and state.

Concluding Comments

This discussion demonstrates that the Qur'an does not recommend any particular form of government. It only enunciates fundamental principles for governance, basing them on essential ideals of absolute justice, equality, freedom of religion and peace; their sole purpose being to develop a system that ensures absolute justice, equality, freedom of religion; in short ensuring the welfare of all citizens. These "Islamic" ideals are consistent with the secular law and the UN Declaration of

Human Rights to which most Islamic countries are signatories. The Qur'an does not prescribe the establishment of "Islamic countries" but requires the establishment of "just" societies, based on the principles stated above. The sharia, the interpretation of Qur'anic teachings by religious scholars and legal experts, was developed from the ninth to the sixteenth century to build a just society in the expanding Muslim empire, in accordance with the Qur'anic principles and the practices of Prophet Muhammadsa. It was meant to be a transient process so "Islamic Laws" could be interpreted to meet the changing needs of the society through 'mutual consultation' and consistent with the development of human intellect. Sadly, this process was frozen towards the latter years of the Ottoman empire. Had the process continued, Islamic Law would have evolved with the changing economic and intellectual paradigms and may well have retained its leadership position as it had prior to the European industrial revolution.

With the advent of the industrial revolution, the Islamic societies failed to transform with changing economic models and were left behind. The Europeans replaced the agrarian based system with a new, industrial system which utilized many of the same principles of equality and social justice that made the earlier Islamic system successful. Instead of reforming their system, the political leadership in the Ottoman empire employed the clergy to justify their assumption of Caliphate (spiritual authority) and thus empowered the clergy to become the self styled custodians of Islam - an act contrary to Qur'anic teachings.

It is absolutely essential that religion and politics be separated; the disastrous consequences of combining religion and politics are evident from the failed societies in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The social and moral decay, rampant corruption, discrimination, terrorism, denial of basic human rights, lack of education, etc., evident in virtually all Muslim countries, suggests that either Islam has failed to deliver, or Muslims have not properly appreciated the spirit of Islamic teachings. Rather than striving for the clergy induced notion of a Muslim state, Muslims should strive to establish societies based on Islamic principles which, not surprisingly, are consistent with most

secular Western systems. Likewise, the prosperity in Dubai where religion is separated from governance forcefully proves this point. It is worth mentioning that the combination of religion and politics has always had disastrous consequences in other cultures as well. European countries failed to develop when religion and politics were combined but became leaders in science and industry under secular governments when just societies, providing people with equal opportunities under the rule of law, were created.

It is incumbent upon Muslims to individually and collectively take stock of their precarious state, denounce the misguided clergy, and seek knowledge afresh to better understand their great faith. Rather than being divided into sects, Muslims should strive to achieve unity by objectively understanding opposing viewpoints, without resorting to violence at the slightest provocation. Muslims must realize that the Europeans had developed the wisdom of separating religion and politics, granting intellectual freedom to individuals, and accepted the necessity for the cultivation of rational thought. Sadly, the Muslims had this wisdom through the Qur'an, which is the basis of their religion. Using this wisdom, earlier Muslim empires succeeded and prospered but declined after having deviated from the fundamental principles of separating religion and politics, justice and intellectual freedom. Muslims have not yet been able to reclaim their lost glory and appear confused. They must realize the loss, revert to the Qur'an's teachings and strive to reclaim the lost wisdom.

(Endnotes)

Generally regarded during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, in the 16th Century

¹ Karen Armstrong, "Battle for God", p 35

² Mirza Tahir Ahmad, "Islam

's Response to Contemporary Issues" p 181-191

³ Report of the Court of Inquiry Constituted under Punjab Act II of 1954 to enquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953 (Munir Commission Report), p 11-13

⁴ Meghnad Desai and Aitzaz Ahsan, "Divided by Democracy" p 96, 102
 ⁵ ibid, p 101

for Report of the Court of Inquiry Constituted under Punjab Act II of 1954 to enquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953 (Munir Commission Report

http://www.thepersecution.org/archive/munir/index.html

7 Ahmed Rashid "Tailaban

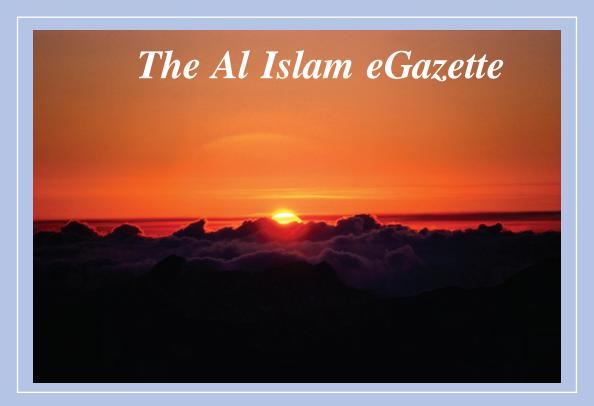
Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia", p 129
 Dawn. 30 March 2007

8 Dawn, 30 March 2007 www.dawn.com/

⁹ BBC Report on Mukhtaran Mai: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4620065.stm

10 BBC Report on Lal Masiid

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6503477.stm



To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Indeed, Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy. And if all the trees that are in the earth were pens, and the ocean - seven more oceans to replenish it - were ink, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise. (Al Luqman 31:27-28)

The Alislam.org team has been busy by the Grace of Allah, for more than a decade now, to catalogue the limitless knowledge about words of Allah and about true Islam.

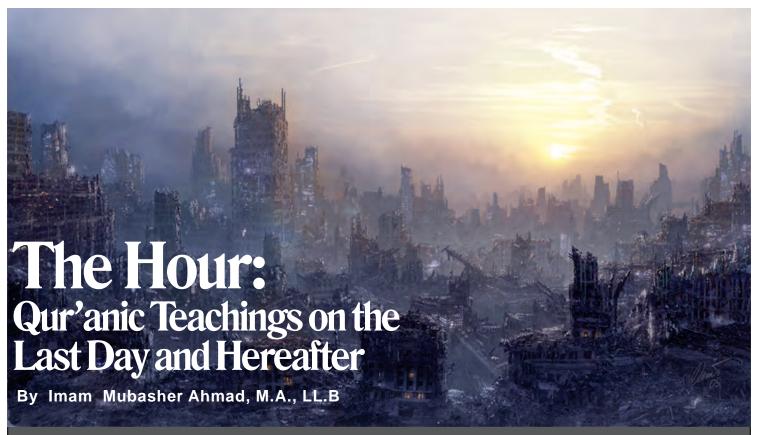
Now, it has also started a new monthly magazine, free of charge, with international membership, running in thousands, to share the information about Ahmadiyyat that is true Islam, in a reader friendly electronic format:

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Say, 'If every ocean become ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even though We brought the like thereof as further help.' (Al Kahf 18:110)



he Holy Quran makes it clear that there are many people who either question the reality of the Hour or ignore it, and that their rejection of the inevitable is to their own loss:

"Cursed be the liars, who are heedless in the depth of their ignorance. They ask: 'When will be the Day of Judgment?' It is the day when they will be tormented at the Fire." (51:11-14)

"Woe, on that day, unto those who reject, who deny the Day of Judgment. And none denies it save every sinful transgressor, who, when Our Signs are recited unto him, says: 'Fables of the ancients!" (83:11-14). "And they say: 'There is nothing except this our present life, and we shall not be raised again.' And if you could only see when they are made to stand before their Lord! He will say: 'Is not this (the second life) the truth?' They will say. 'Yes, by our Lord.' He will say, 'Then taste the punishment because you disbelieved.' (6:30-31).

But those who are gifted with understanding and firmly grounded in knowledge, say: 'Our Lord! You will certainly assemble mankind on the Day about which there is no doubt; surely, Allah breaks not His promise.' (3:9-10.)

"And when it was said, 'The promise of Allah is certainly true, and so is the Hour, there is no doubt about its coming'; you

said, 'We know not what the Hour is; we think it to be nothing but conjecture, and we are not convinced.'"(45:33.)

The Hour is Sure to Come

For Muslims, belief in the reality of the Last Day is an article of faith. To have faith in the reality of the Hour is very strongly counseled by Allah Himself in the Sura Al-Qayamah or The Resurrection:

"Nay! I call to witness the Day of Resurrection! And (in support thereof) I call to witness the self-accusing soul! Does man think that We shall not assemble his bones? We have the power to restore his very finger-tips. But man desires to continue in his evil deeds (75:2-6).

The Holy Quran repeatedly asserts that the Hour is sure to come. To quote a few relevant verses: "The Hour will surely come; there is no doubt about it; yet many men believe not" (40:60).

"Surely, the Day of Decision (*Yaum al-Fasl*) has an appointed time" (78:18).

"Surely, the Hour is coming; I am going to manifest it, that every soul may be recompensed for its endeavor" (20:16).

"Allah is the Truth, and that it is He Who brings the dead to life, and that He has the power over all things; and because the Hour will certainly come, there is no doubt about it, and because Allah will raise up those who are in the graves" (22:7-8).

Different Names

In the Holy Quran, various names are used to allude to the day when the domain of the human race shall be completely wiped out from the surface of the earth, and a new dimension of life shall commence in the Hereafter. In the very beginning of the Holy Quran, in Sura Al-Fateha, four major attributes of God are mentioned, and one of them is that He is Malik-e-Yaum ad Din the Master of the Day of Judgment (1:4). Other commonly used terms in the Holy Quran related to the inevitable event in the future are the Day of Resurrection (Yaum al Qayamah), the Hour of Doom (Al-Sa'ah), the Last Day (Yaum al Akhir), and the Day of Judgment (Yaum ad Din). The Holy Quran gives such importance to the belief in the Hour that some of the Suras are wholly devoted to the description of the events that shall take place on that day. One Sura is named Al-Qayamah - the Resurrection, another is entitled Al-Ghashiya — the Overwhelming Calamity, and still another is called Al-Qari'ah — the Striking Calamity. Dealing with the same subject matter, one Sura is named Al-Hagga (the Inevitable), and at other places the Holy Quran calls it Yaum al-Fasl — the Day of Decision and Yaum al Hisab —the Day of Reckoning. The Hour in the sense of 'end' or 'termination' has been used in the Holy Quran to indicate also the death of individuals as well as a crushing defeat of an enemy. For example, 'The Hour' used in the sense of a 'sudden death' is: "They are indeed the losers who deny the meeting with Allah, so much so,

that when the Hour shall come on them suddenly, they will say, O, our grief for our neglecting this Hour!" (6:32).

The same term is used in the sense of a crushing defeat that breaks the power of an enemy: "Are they saying that they are a victorious host allied together to help each other? Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they will show their backs. Nay, the Hour is their promised time, and the Hour is most grievous and bitter. Surely, the guilty are in manifest error, and gone mad. On the day when they will be dragged into the Fire on their faces, and told: Taste ye the touch of Hell" (54:45-47, 49.)

The symbol of the Arabs who opposed the Holy Prophet was the moon, and their power was doomed as the Holy Quran prophesied: "And the Hour has drawn nigh, and the moon is rent asunder" (54:2).

The term 'the Hour' is also used in the Holy Quran to indicate the termination of a Prophet's dispensation. For example, Jesus has been called "the Hour" in the sense he was the last Prophet in the Mosaic dispensation. "But verily he (Jesus) was a sign of the Hour" (43:62). No prophet appeared among the Jews after him, and the Muslim dispensation replaced the Mosaic dispensation.

Signs of the Coming of the Hour

There are several events mentioned in the Holy Quran as signs of the Hour. They are to appear prior to the final destruction of the present life on the earth. For example, in Sura Al-Zilzal (The Earthquake), the shaking of Earth is described as follows:

"When the earth is shaken with a violent earthquake; when the earth ejects out her weary loads; when man says in astonishment: What is wrong with her? On that day she will disclose her concealed resources; for your Lord will inspire her to do so. On that day, men will come forth in separate groups to see the consequences of their deeds. Then he who will have done so much as an atom of good shall see it; and he who will have done so much as an atom of evil shall see it" (99:2-9).

Again, in Sura Al-Naba: "The day when

the trumpet will be blown; and you will come in large groups; and the heaven shall be open and shall become all doors; and the mountains shall be made to move and shall become as if they were a mirage. Surely, Hell lies in ambush, a home for the rebellious; they will tarry therein for ages" (78:19-24).

The Day shall be of climatic in nature, cosmic in its scope: One of the signs will be the dark visible Smoke — *Al-Dukhan*: "Then watch for the day when the sky shall bring forth a dark pall of smoke plainly visible, enveloping the people. It will be a grievous torment...We shall remove the chastisement a little, but they will surely return to evil" (44:11-12, 16).

"He keeps asking: 'When will be the Day of Resurrection?' On the Day, the eye will be dazzled, and the moon shall be eclipsed, and the sun and the moon would be brought together. On that day man will say, 'Where to escape?' Nay! There is no refuge! With your Lord alone shall be the place of rest on that day. On that day man will be informed of that which he has committed and of that which he had neglected. In truth, man is aware of his own mind/self, even though he puts forward his excuses' (75:7-16.)

"When the stars are made to disappear, and when the heavens is rent asunder, and when the mountains are carried away as dust, and when the messengers are made to reach their appointed time" (77: 9-12).

"When the earth is shaken with her violent shaking, and the earth heaves out her burdens, and man says, 'What is the matter with her?' That day will she tell her news, for your Lord has so directed. On that day people will come in diverse groups that they may be shown the consequences of their action. Then whoso will have done the smallest particle of good will see it, and whoso will have done the smallest particle of ill will also see it (99:2-9).

The rising of super-powers of Ya'juj and Ma'juj (Gog and Magog) is another sign of the approaching End Time: Ya'juj is interpreted to be the Christian nations of the West, and Ma'juj, the atheist nations of Russia and China: "Even when Gog and Magog are let loose, and they shall hasten

forth from every height; and the true promise draws near, then behold, the eyes of those who disbelieve will fixedly stare and they will say: Alas for us! We were indeed heedless of this; nay, we were wrongdoers!" (21:97-98).

Another sign is coming out of the "beast" (da'abbah) from Earth. The Holy Quran tells: "When the sentence is passed against them, We will bring forth from the earth a beast/germ unto them [the unjust] which shall wound them because mankind had no faith in Our Signs" (27:83). The Arabic word da'abbah connotes an earthly insect/worm/germ and it is interpreted either as an appearance of devastating plagues in the Latter Days, or as the spread of a materialistic craze among Western nations 'whose labor is all lost in pursuit of the life of this world' (18:105).

Some other Signs are narrated in Sura Al-Takwir: "When the sun is wrapped up, and when the stars are obscured, and when the mountains are made to move, and when the she-camels, ten-month pregnant, are abandoned, and when the beasts are gathered together, and when the seas are made to flow forth one into the other, and when people are brought together, and when the girl-child buried alive is questioned about, 'For what crime was she killed?' When the books are widely spread abroad, and when the heaven is laid bare, and when the Fire is caused to blaze up, and when the garden is brought nigh, then every soul will know what it has brought forward" (81:2-15).

The Hour Will Be Sudden

No one knows the exact time of the End other than God, but whenever it arrives, there will be an element of suddenness and surprise: "And to Allah belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth; and the matter of the Hour is but as the twinkling of an eye. Nay, it is nearer still. Surely, Allah has power over all things." (16:78).

"To Him alone is referred the knowledge of the Hour" (41:48). "Men ask you concerning the Hour. Say: The knowledge of the Hour is with Allah alone. And what will make you know that the Hour is near?" (33:64).

"Do they, then, feel secure from the coming on them of an overwhelming punishment from Allah or the sudden coming of the Hour upon them while they are unaware?" (12:108).

A Calamitous Time

The Holy Quran gives a vivid picture of the purging as a devastation of universal proportions: "The great Calamity! What is great Calamity? And what should make you know what the great Calamity is? The day when mankind will be like scattered moth, and the mountains will be like carded wool. Then as for whose scales are heavy, he will have a pleasant life. But as for him whose scales are light, Hell will be his nursing mother. And what should make you know what that is? It is a burning Fire" (101:2-12).

"And indeed We have destroyed people before you who were like unto you. But is there anyone who would receive admonish?" (54:47-52)

"On the day when this earth shall be changed into another earth, and the heavens too; and they will all appear before Allah, the One, and the Most Supreme" (14:49).

"Verily, that which you are promised must come to pass. So when the stars are made to lose their light, and when the heaven is rent asunder, and when the mountains are blown away" (77:8-11).

"When the heaven is cleft asunder, and when the stars are scattered, and when the rivers are made to flow forth, and when the graves are laid open, each soul shall then know what it has sent forth and what it has held back" (82:2-6).

"Do not such (deceiving people) know that they will be raised again unto a terrible day, the day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds?" (83:5-7).

"When the heaven bursts asunder, and gives ear to her Lord – and this is incumbent upon her – and when the earth is spread out, and casts out all that is in her, and becomes empty; and gives her ear to her Lord – and this is incumbent upon her" (84:2-6).

The Creator and the Destroyer is the One

"Say: It is Allah Who gives you life, and then causes you to die; then He will gather you together unto the day of Resurrection (*Yaum al-Qayamah*) about which there is no doubt. But many people know it not "(45:27.)

Again, the Holy Quran declares: "It is Allah Who created you in a state of weakness, and after weakness gave strength, caused weakness and old age. He creates what He pleases. He is All-Knowing, the All-Powerful. And on the day when the Hour shall arrive, the guilty will swear that they tarried not save an hour - thus were they turned away from the right path. But those who are given knowledge and faith will say, 'You have indeed tarried according to the Book of Allah, till the Day of Resurrection (Yaum al-B'as). And this is the Day of Resurrection, but you did not care to know.' So on that Day, their excuses will not avail the wrongdoers; nor will they be allowed to make amends" (30:55-58.)

"Allah originates creation; then He repeats it; then to Him shall you be brought back. And on the day when the Hour will arrive, the guilty shall be in despair. ... And on the day when the Hour will arrive – on that day they will become separated from one another. Then those who believed, and did good works, will be honored, and made happy in a Garden. But as for those who disbelieved, and rejected Hereafter, these will be brought forth in punishment" (30:12-17).

The Guilty Shall be Chastised

"On the day of Judgment they shall be driven to a most severe chastisement" (2:86).

"Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And for them is a grievous punishment" (2:175).

"Allah will neither speak to them, nor look upon them" (3:78).

"Those who are miserly in respect of what Allah had granted them, their miserliness shall be put as a collar round their necks on the Day of Resurrection" (3:181).

"As for those who persist in unbelief, even if they can offer all that is on the earth, and as much more, to redeem them-selves from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection, it will not be accepted from them. There awaits them a woeful punishment. They will desire to come out of Hell, but they will not be able to come out. There awaits them a lasting chastisement (5:37-38).

With regards to the Pharaoh who denied the Signs of God and persecuted the Children of Israel, the Holy Quran declares: "He will lead his people on the Day of Judgment and land them into Hell. Evil is the place which he will lead them to quench their thirst. There trails them a curse in this world. It shall trail them on the Day of Judgment. Evil is the gift they shall be given" (11:99-100).

"We shall gather them on the Day of resurrection, dragging them on their faces, blind, dumb, and deaf. Hell shall be their resort. As often as its flames die out, We shall make it burn the more fiercely for them. Such shall be their reward; for they rejected Our Signs/revelations, and said: 'Shall we be raised to a new life when we are reduced to bones and dust?'"(17:98-99).

"But he that neglects My warning shall lead a miserable life; and what is more, We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection" (20:125).

Record Books of Good and Evil Deeds

God has created man with a soul – an inner self — and all his actions leave permanent impressions upon it to the minutest detail. Those impressions are 'saved', and on the Day of Judgment, they shall become manifest. A person shall be able to see and read, so to say, his own book of records of good or bad deeds:

"We make every man's deeds cling to his neck; and on the Day of Judgment We shall confront him with a book in which he will find all his deeds laid bare. It will be said to him: Read your book! Today your own conscience will suffice to reckon with you" (17:14-15).

"So whosoever does good deeds, and he is a believer, there is no rejection of his effort, and We write it down for him" (21:95).

"And everything they have done is recorded in the books (*zubur*). And every matter, small and great, is written down. Verily, the righteous would be in the midst of Gardens and streams; in the seat of Truth with the Omnipotent King." (54:53-56).

"Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private counsels? Aye, Our messengers (that is, the angels) with them write down" (43:81). "This is Our record that speaks against you with truth. Surely We wrote what you did" (45:30).

"And the book will be placed before them, then you see the guilty fearful of that what which is therein; and they will say: 'O woe to us! What kind of a book is this! It leaves neither a small thing nor a great one, but numbers them all' (18:50).

"Nay the record of the wicked is in *Sijjin* (a register of a prison). And what should make you know what *Sijjin* is? It is a Book written comprehensively" (83:8).

"You, O man, are verily laboring towards your Lord, a hard laboring; then you are going to meet Him. Then as for him who is given his book of record in his right hand, he will soon have an easy reckoning, and he will return to his household, rejoicing. But as for him who will have his book of record given to him behind his back, he will soon call for destruction, and he will burn in a blazing Fire" (84:7-13).

The writing down of good and evil deeds should not be understood as if papers, pen and ink are being used. It is the preservation of a record of all our actions in an unknown domain of God, different from the material things.

Full Justice Accorded

"And the judging (wazn) on that day will be just" (7:9). "We shall set up just balance (mawazin -- measures/scale) on the Day of Judgment, so that no wrong will be done to anyone; and should there be a deed as little as the grain of a mustard seed, We will bring it to account; and We need none to share the judgment with Us" (21:48).

"All beings are destined to taste death; and on the Day of Judgment you shall be paid your wages in full" (3:185).

"On the day when Allah will raise them (those who opposed Allah and His Messenger) all together, He will inform them of what they did. Allah has kept account of it, while they forgot it. And Allah is Witness over all things" (58:7).

"Your Lord will judge all their differences on the Day of Judgment." (16:125, 45:18).

"Whoever acts dishonestly shall bring with him on the Day of Resurrection that about which he has been dishonest. Then, every soul shall be fully paid what it has earned, and shall not be wronged" (3:162).

The God-fearing Shall be Rewarded

"The life of this world is made to appear attractive to those who disbelieve; and they scoff at those who believe. But those who fear God shall be above them on the day of Resurrection; and Allah bestows His gifts on whomsoever He pleases without reckoning" (2:213).

"Say, 'Who has made unlawful Allah's beautiful things of adornments and elegance which He has produced for His servants and the delicious and pure things of (His) providing?' Say, 'They are primarily meant for the believers in this life, but exclusively for them on the day of Judgment.' In this way We explain the Message for a people who possess knowledge" (7:33).

"And on the Day of Resurrection, you will see those who lied against Allah with their faces darkened. Is there not in Hell an abode for the proud? And Allah will deliver the righteous and lead them to a place of security and success; evil shall not touch them, nor shall they grieve" (39:61-62).

Our Final Prayer

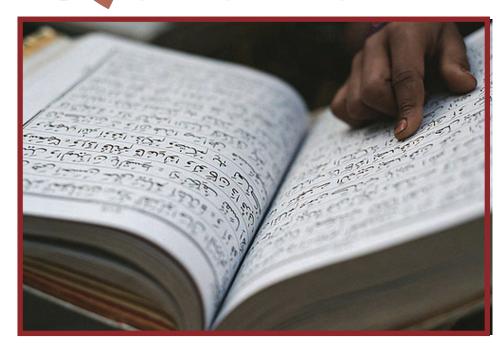
"Our Lord, give us what You have promised to us through Your Messengers; and disgrace us not on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, You break not Your promise" (3:195). Amen! 1

By Saadia Ahmed

his is a topic that is overwhelming in its scope, as numerous prophecies and signs mentioned in the holy books of different faiths were fulfilled by the advent of the Promised Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmadas of Qadian. The coming of a promised reformer in the latter days had been foretold by many previous prophets like Krishnaas, Jesusas, and Baba Guru Nanakas, and, of course, the Holy Prophet of Islam. Prophet Jesus^{as} had referred to the coming of the Messiah in the latter days as his Second Coming on a number of occasions, as recorded in the New Testament. One only has to look at a sampling of the signs and prophecies mentioned in the Holy Bible regarding the second advent of Jesus^{as}, and how they were fulfilled in the person of the Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, to realize that they are a testament to his veracity.

The coming of a promised reformer in the latter days had been foretold by many previous prophets like Krishna^{as}, Jesus^{as}, and Baba Guru Nanak^{ra,} and, of course, the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmadasof Qadian



A Promised Messiah

Prophecies and signs mentioned in the holy books of different faiths were fulfilled by the advent of the Promised Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmadas of Qadian. The coming of a promised reformer in the latter days had been foretold by many previous prophets.

The majority of the predictions that discuss Christ's as return in the 19th century are found in *Matthew* 24 and *Luke* 21. These signs and prophecies can be divided into five main categories:

- 1. The time of his return, specifically in years.
- 2. The social environment that mankind would find itself experiencing at that time.
- 3. Specific events and heavenly signs.
- 4. How the Messiah and his followers are to be treated
- 5. The general location of the second coming.

The Time of Second Coming

The Biblical prophecies regarding the reappearance of Christ in the 19th century are so clear and so numerous that hundreds of Christian scholars in the 19th century expected the immediate appearance of Christ, and many went so far as to precisely predict when he was to return. Their interpretation of these prophecies led them to await the second advent of Jesus between the years 1826- 1870.

For instance, Bengle fixed the date of Christ's return at 1836, and from this prediction, others followed in rapid succession. The Irvingites in England and Scotland announced 1835, 1838, 1864 aand 1866. Mother Lee and her Shakers abolished matrimony, as they also believed Christ's return was at hand. Cunningham predicted 1839, Elliot 1866, Brewer and Decker both predicted 1867 and Seis favoured 1870. William Miller, who predicted 1844 as the year, had up to 500,000 followers, many of whom were so convinced of Christ's return on October 22, 1844 that they refused to plant crops, gave away their money, discharged their employees, settled their accounts and made preparations for the climatic midnight cry, found in Matthew 25:6:

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

They dressed in shrouds, and stood on mountaintops in New York State awaiting Christ's descent. That day has gone down in history as the *Great Disappointment*.

A Famous Jewish convert to Christianity, Joseph Wolfe predicted 1847. Claus Epp, a leader of the Mennonite Brethren in Russia predicted March 8, 1889. The Dukhabors set forth from the Canadian village in 1902, some

naked, to meet the Lord. Reverend Coming in his book, *The End*, written in 1879, concluded that all the signs of those days were preparing for the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ. He wrote, Christ is at our door. Harriet Livingston a famous Washingtonian, preached the Second Coming before the House of Representatives in this time period.'

In the same time frame in the year 1882, on the other side of the globe in a remote village of India a humble man of God received the following revelation regarding his appointment as the Divine Reformer through the following words:

"Proclaim; I have been commissioned and I am the first of the believers." (Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya, vol. 3)

In the year 1889 the Promised Messiah received the revelation that: "The Messiah, son of Mary, prophet of Allah, had died and in his attribute thou hast come in accordance with the promise. And the promise of Allah was bound to be fulfilled." [Tazkirah, revelations of the Promised Messiah]

Hence God had fulfilled the promise that he had made to mankind through his prophets, and that era, instead of being a great disappointment, was an era of Glad Tidings, as hundreds of people were able to embrace the truth at the hand of the Promised Reformer of the age.

Social Environment

Now let us turn to the second category of signs in the Bible that relate to the social environment pertaining to the second advent of Jesus. In Matthew 24:6 it is said:

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."

The Bible also refers to these times as times of great trouble and tribulations. The 19th century was a century when many wars were fought and many significant geographical changes and tribulations occurred. To name a few there was the war between Britain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia against France in 1815; the war of 1818 between America and Britain; the Crimean War 1853; he Civil War in America 1861: the war between Britain and China in

1860; the Sepoy Mutiny in India, 1857; Russia against Turkey, 1870; China against Korea, 1894; the Boxer Rebellion in China, 1900; Great Britain against the Boer Republic 1899; and America against Spain in 1898.

Another prediction regarding that time according to Matthew 24:14 is:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come."

'The study of the spread of Christianity conducted by the millennium scholars of the 19th century establishes that this was the time when the message of the kingdom had been conveyed to the entire world. According to the British and American Bible Societies, 421 million copies of the Bible had been distributed in 50 languages in practically every country of the world. In 1842, Mr. Spicer stated in *Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy*, that the gospel had been spread to 955 of the inhabitants of the earth.'

Heavenly Signs

The next category deals with heavenly signs, or special astronomical activities. In the *New Testament*, Matthew 24:29 Jesus^{as}, narrating the Signs of his Second Coming, says:

"Immediately after the tribulations of those days, shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from the heavens and the power of the heavens shall be shaken."

The 19th century was marked by an increased sighting of comets and meteor showers. To the people witnessing these events, it would surely have looked as if the stars were falling from heaven. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmadas was born in Qadian, India in the year 1835 and departed from this world in 1908. Heavenly signs mark both the years of his birth and death. Haley's comet made its most dramatic appearance of the modern times in 1835, and a great meteor impact occurred in Siberia in 1908. Also, the sun and the moon were darkened in 1894 and 1895 and the great prophecy of Lunar and Solar eclipses was fulfilled. It is also of note that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmadas was the only claimant to prophethood who lived to claim on the basis of Divine revelation, that the prophecy has been fulfilled in his person. He also declared on oath that he is the Promised Messiah and

"A Warner came unto the world, but the world accepted him not, but God will accept him and establish his truth by mighty assaults."

Mahdi and these heavenly signs were a manifestation of the truth of his claim.

Treatment of the Followers

Let us now turn to the fourth category of millennium prophecies, those that describe how the Messiah and his follower were to be treated. Matthew's Chapter 24 says:

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you and ye shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Over the course of the last 118 years, the persecution of Ahmadies because of their faith is widely recorded and documented. They have been murdered in cold blood, their mosques demolished, their properties looted only because they believed that the Messiah had come. But despite all efforts to banish this community from the world, the banishers have themselves been eroded while the community continues to thrive, hence fulfilling this Biblical prophecy.

Location

The fifth category of prophecies indicating the general location of the Second Coming is found in Matthew 24:27:

"For as lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

Christian scholars interpreted this verse literally, expecting Christ's return to be accompanied by a huge flash of lightning that would travel across the globe. However, the verse indicates that since Jesus^{as} was in Jerusalem when he made this prophecy, the Second Coming would appear east of Jerusalem, and the light or teachings of the Promised One would first be accepted in the east and would eventually extend to the west. The advent of the Promised Messiah in Qadian, India, is a fulfillment of this prophecy, as Qadian is directly east of Jerusalem.

Refutation of the Conclusions Drawn by Some Christians

Some Christian scholars who were anxiously awaiting the second advent of Jesus in the 19th century concluded from the appearance of these signs, and fulfillment of these prophecies, that since Jesus did not physically descend with the heavenly light he must have been invisible. These prophecies point to the presence of Jesus rather than his actual physical descent from heavens. Since the 1920's, the Watchtower or Jehovah's Witnesses have taught that Christ was given the kingdom of the world in 1914. They go door to door warning and informing people that Christ's presence is among us and that the present calamities and moral deterioration in the world are due to the world not having recognized this

How similar is this to the revelation received by the Promised Messiahas and recorded in his book Divine Manifestations that:

"A Warner came unto the world, but the world accepted him not, but God will accept him and establish his truth by mighty assaults."

The difference is that Jehovah's Witnesses believe that they are a witness to the second presence of Jesus while we have been blessed to have recognized the actual Second Coming of Jesus in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmadas of Qadian.

The Promised Messiahas explains this revelation in the following words:

"The days are near, in fact. I can see them close at hand, when the world shall witness a terrible sight: not only earthquakes but also many fearsome calamities shall overtake man, some from the skies and some from the earth. This will happen because people have stopped worshipping their true God and have become lost in the affairs of the world with all their heart and their effort and intent."

"If I had not come, these afflictions would perhaps have been delayed a little.

But with my coming the secret purposes of an affronted God which were hidden so far, became manifest. Says God: 'We never punish unless we send a Messenger.' Those who repent shall find security and those who fear before calamity overtakes them shall be shown mercy."

Today we are a witness to the fulfillment of this prophecy. The world is being turned upside down with earthquakes, hurricanes, fires and storms as has never been seen before with such force and frequency. The times of Noah are reappearing in front of our eyes as the Bible says in Matthew 24:37-

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

And as the Promised Messiahas says in his book Divine Manifestations:

"The times of Noah shall reappear before your eyes, and your own eyes will be witnesses to the calamity that overtook the cities of Lot." [Haqitul Wahy]

The implication in this quotation is that salvation in these troubled times lies in recognizing and following the reformer of this age. It makes us realize how truly fortunate and blessed we are to have been able to acknowledge and accept this great bounty of God. There are still many out there who are anxiously awaiting, and desperately searching for, the reformer promised by God for today's times. And unfortunately there are many who are now questioning the very existence of a god who can be indifferent to the present state of religion. Hence, recognition of the Messiah has now become a matter of the survival of religion itself. ¹◆

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Marriage: Tradition of the Holy Prophet^{sa}

Narrated Anas bin Malik:

"A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet asking how the Prophet worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, 'Where are we from the Prophet as his past and future sins have been forgiven.' Then one of them said, 'I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever.' The other said, 'I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast.' The third said, 'I will keep away from women and will not marry forever.' Allah's Apostle came to them and said, 'Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers)."

Narrated 'Abdullah:

"We were with the Prophet while we were young and had no wealth whatever. So Allah's Apostle said, 'O young people! Whoever among you can marry, should marry, because it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty (i.e. his private parts from committing illegal sexual intercourse etc.), and whoever is not able to marry, should fast, as fasting diminishes his sexual power."

(Ahadith, Sahih Bukhari)

Keep The Company of the Righteous

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}

always preferred to keep company with the virtuous and if he observed any weakness in any of his Companions^{ra} he admonished him gently and in private.

Abu Musa Ash'arira relates: "The Holy Prophetsa illustrated the benefit to be derived from good friends and virtuous companions and the injury to be appre-

hended from evil friends and vicious companions by saying: 'A man who keeps company with virtuous people is like a person who carries about musk with him. If he partakes of it he derives benefit from it, if he sells it he makes a profit out of it and if he merely keeps it he enjoys its perfume.

A man who keeps company with evil persons is like one who blows into a charcoal furnace; all that he can expect is that a spark may alight upon his clothes and set them on fire or that the gas emitted by the charcoal may upset his brain'."

He used to say that a man's character takes on the color of the company he keeps and that therefore one should be careful to spend one's time in the company of the good.

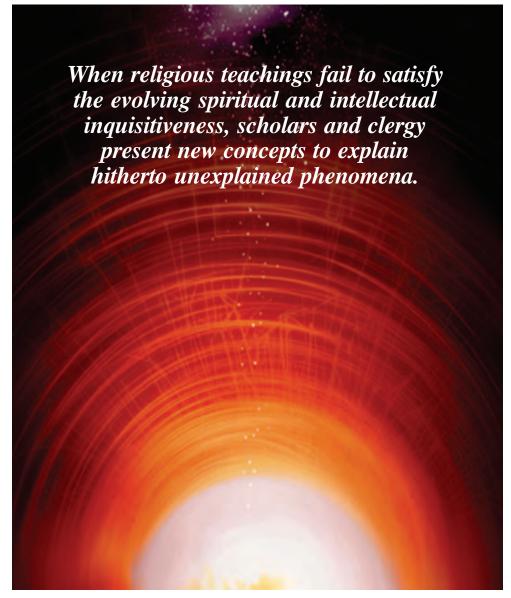
(Bukhari and Muslim)

The Coming of the Second Messiah: A Mystery According to World Religions

By Arif Humayun

ost religions agree in an ultimate and central powerful authority (generally referred to as Bhagwan, Jehovah, Yahweh, God, Allah, etc.), the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. For simplicity, that ultimate central authority will be referred to as God in this discussion. Religions concur that human beings were primarily created for serving humanity as manifestations of God's attributes and to illustrate and practice Divine traits in their lives. Religions provide the roadmap and religious practices the training towards achieving that objective. If people fail to fulfill their responsibilities, they do not in any manner defeat the purpose of God's creation but simply dislodge themselves from that position of honor. Each religion traces its origins to a founder who, in some faiths is considered part of Divinity (e.g., Christians) while a human and the bearer of God's message in others (e.g., Jews and Muslims). In any event, the Divine origin of the message is not disputed. Most of these teachings have been communicated to succeeding generations through oral traditions and translations; these are subsequently explained and amplified by later prophets, who, within each dispensation, proclaim Divine authority. Additional translations and explanations by scholars and clergy tend to add to the original content which continue to serve as a guide towards attaining Godly traits. Thus the religious orders continue to propagate; prophets become a central figure in each religion, and the adherents look up to them for continued guidance. At some distant point after its revelation, that teaching becomes stagnant and unable to explain scientific and historic phenomenon either due to its inherent limitations or subsequent interpolations.

When religious teachings fail to satisfy the evolving spiritual and intellectual inquisitiveness, scholars and clergy present new concepts to explain hitherto unexplained phenomena. The initial simplistic explanations begin to unravel and the leaders stress reliance on 'belief' over reason and rationality. Myths develop and religion devolves to dogma and is no longer able to satisfy the



intellectual and spiritual needs of its adherents. Leaders, however, struggle to retain control (power) over their followers as their financial contributions provide sustenance. It becomes a necessity for their very survival! Political considerations come into play and the entire concept of religion for developing Godly traits takes a back seat. Misinterpretation and/or misrepresentations creep in and people lose sight of the primary objective of their creation. They thus revert to their default mode and seek after worldly distractions. Sadly, the original scriptures of most religions have not been preserved and there is no way to reestablish or recreate the original message.

Thus, each religion has been divided into subgroups or sects which are essentially based on different interpretations or concepts presented by their respective intellectuals.

Fortunately, each major religion also believes in the second coming of their founder or his designated nominee to reinvigorate its true message before the end of time. Adherents of several religions claim that their founders have ascended to heavens and await their second coming. For example, the Hindus await the reincarnation of Krishna, Buddhists await Buddha, Zoroastrians their savior, Jews await the Jewish Messiah, and Christians await the second coming of Jesus. Sikhs

await the return of Baba Nanak while Muslims, like Christians, also await the second coming of the Messiah - Jesus, Son of Mary - and the Mehdi (reformer). Adherents of each religion believe that the second coming of their founder or their designated representative will lead them to victory over other faiths, confirming their superiority and truthfulness. Victory would mean 'non believers' embracing their faith to earn a place in Heaven; failure to do so will cause them to perish and burn in hell. In short, most religions claim an absolute monopoly over truth, proclaiming exclusivity over Heaven for their followers, and predicting a violent and destructive end for 'non believers' – a position that is totally un-

A critical overview of the situation presents a very dangerous and confusing picture. Assuming the "end of the world" event will occur at a common time for all people, it would be reasonable to assume that the second coming of all religious founders (or their designated nominees) should also coincide. Adherents of each religion will acknowledge the second coming of their founder and will strive hard to establish their righteousness; in their newfound zeal, no stone would be left unturned to prove their point. A scenario of religious wars with utter chaos and destruction is easily conceivable. In their enthusiasm and frenzy, no group will consider making any compromises with other groups as that would be tantamount to ceding or compromising their truthfulness. Either way, the situation would be unprecedented to say the least resulting in several simultaneous Armageddons of Biblical proportions. In short, accepting each religion's claim at face value is fraught with destruction and goes against the very essence of religions and the creation of human beings.

It is inconceivable that the same God would send contradictory religions to the world. God, who created humanity to exhibit the manifestations of His attributes, cannot even be accused of such gross injustice. This situation can be resolved by two simple assumptions either there is a multitude of Gods guiding their followers in different, conflicting directions or there is only one God who sent down His message incrementally to match the evolving human intellect and humans have misconstrued His message by not recognizing the subsequent updates. Most religions can easily reject the former assumption as outrageous but will also find accepting the latter difficult. However, an exhaustive review of their respective scriptures will reveal evolutionary trends leading to a broadening and unifying message. This is akin to gradually upgrading the spiritual teaching and training to guide human beings to transform from basic instinctive behavior to the ultimate saintly stage where the individual's only concern is the welfare of others – a Divine attribute. If that assumption is accepted, then the second coming of all leaders should coincide into one personality who would usher in an era of peace. His message will prevail not by the use of force but by compassion, logic and reasoning - a situation resembling Heaven on earth! A detailed analysis of this evolutionary trend among Semitic scriptures is presented elsewhere.1

A similar analysis can be extended to include non-Semitic scriptures. For example, Pundit Vaid Prakash of Ilahabad University asserts that the Final Reformer awaited by the Hindus (Kalki Avatar) is none other than Prophet Muhammad^{sa} (Appendix 1). Similarly, some scholars believe that Hindus are Prophet Noah's as followers or are the Sabians that are referred to in the Qur'an.2, 3 These references cite similarities between the Qur'an and Vedas², actually comparing several Qur'anic and Vedic verses to show virtual unanimity between the two. For example, according to these sources, the Hindu temple and the Muslim mosque are built on the same East-West axis. Like Muslims who make seven rounds between Safah and Marwah during Hajj, the Hindus also go around the fire seven times during their religious ceremonies. Similarly the dress code for the Muslim Hajj and the Hindu Teerat Yatra is virtually identical. Several other similarities are also documented by these sources. The only reason for interjecting this comparison is to demonstrate the commonality of purpose and practice between the earliest and the latest religions.

Rejecting the assumption of multiple Gods as untenable and further developing the second assumption that one God sent the same message to different people at different times, actually makes more sense. In that case, a final universal message to upgrade and blend earlier messages into one will be consistent with the unity of purpose that all religions profess. Accepting this assumption, the concept of the second coming makes more sense and is consistent with the object of creation. Let us now consider the concept of the second coming in this light.

The Old and New Testaments explain the concept of the second coming and that may apply to founders of all religions. Per the Old

Testament, Elijahas went up to Heaven in a chariot of fire and his return to earth would herald the coming of the Jewish Messiah. When Jesus^{as} claimed to be that Messiah, the Jews rejected his claim citing that Elijahas had not yet returned. Jesus^{as} clarified that misconception by identifying John the Baptist as the second (spiritual) advent of Elijahas. Thus, Jesus^{as} had established that the second coming would be a spiritual and not a physical phenomenon. This interpretation is critically important and consistent with the laws of nature. The physical second advent of Elijahas and the advent of the Jewish Messiah have not yet occurred for the Jews. Those who accepted Jesus'as message overcame that intellectual hurdle. Similarly, the Old and New Testament foretells the advent of a New, Universal Law which would last until the end of time.4

The Qur'an happens to be that New Law which fulfills the prophecies of all earlier scriptures. Revealed through Prophet Muhammadsa , the Qur'an addresses all mankind and delivers an unequivocal message of peace, universal brotherhood, absolute justice, and equality. It makes the individual responsible for their actions and, leaving judgments about spiritual matters to God, rejects the notion that truth and salvation can be monopolized by any group. The Qur'an enunciates broad principles of human behavior and in some cases, allows people to deliberate upon the details, consistent with the needs of their time and place. Claiming to be devoid of all internal and external inconsistencies, the Qur'an is capable of explaining scientific discoveries and providing insights of what is to come. Unlike earlier scriptures, the Qur'anic text has been preserved in its original form, in the language it was revealed and it has no generally accepted textual variants. Thus, the original text can be consulted for independent research in case of any dispute.

The Qur'an has the unique distinction of acknowledging the truthfulness of all past religions. It affirms that innumerable (greater than 124,000) prophets have been sent to all people at different times with the same universal message of God's unity. The scope of earlier messages was limited and of regional character to prepare people for the ultimate, comprehensive teachings when they were intellectually capable of appreciating it. Islam's concept of "the People of the Book," which traditionally is taken to mean Jews and Christians, can be viewed in a broader context. The Qur'an declares Adamas to be the first prophet

The Muslims' current spiritual and moral condition is a good barometer to comprehend the meaning of Prophet Mohammad'ssa prophecy. Muslims today are absolutely confused and have lost the essence of Qur'anic teachings.

and the first Muslim because he submitted to the will of God. Of the more than 124,000 prophets sent to all people throughout the world, only about 50 can be identified through the Bible and the Qur'an; the identities of others are not known. These prophets and their followers were obviously Muslims, per the Qur'an, and their message was ultimately upgraded to Islam. It can thus be hypothesized that followers of all prophets, between Adam^{as} and Mohammad^{sa}, can be accommodated in the expanded concept of "the People of the Book." This serves to reconfirm the unity of purpose and universal brotherhood among all human beings.

As already stated, Muslims also await the second coming of the Messiah and *Mehdi* (reformer). The Promised Messiah has been identified as Jesus^{as}, son of Mary. The advent of the Messiah had been foretold in the Qur'an⁵ and his role has been clarified in the Ahadith⁶ (the Prophet Mohammad's^{sa} traditions) whereby he declares that the essence of Islam will be lost amongst the Muslims in the latter days and the Messiah's role will be to restore the Qur'an's original meaning, consistent with contemporary developments.

The Muslims' current spiritual and moral condition is a good barometer to comprehend the meaning of Prophet Mohammad's sa prophecy. Muslims today are absolutely confused and have lost the essence of Qur'anic teachings. They have adopted conflicting and contradictory positions about fundamental concepts like Jihad, women's education, freedom of speech and choice, blasphemy, etc., and even the Messiah's second coming. While many scholars are convinced about his spiritual second coming, some deny that concept altogether while another segment is fully convinced about his physical descent from Heaven in full glory. Some diehard scholars have even identified a location in Syria for this 'magnificent' descent. Myths have crept into the Muslim faith and the teachings have become mere dogma. The true Messiah may be the Muslims' last hope for spiritual and moral redemption.

The resultant chaos has given rise to self proclaimed guardians of faith like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Pakistan's Jama'at-e-Islami and several similar organizations whose progeny is Osama Bin Ladin's Al-Qaida and their affiliates. These organizations have redefined Islamic precepts to suit their selfish objectives and some even proclaim terrorism and killing innocent people as a noble religious obligation. They issue religious decrees (fatwas) at will and enforce them by force, if necessary. Interestingly, each of the several dozen groups (or sects) among Muslims do not agree on their interpretation of the Qur'an and those differences are so significant that each group has declared all others non-Muslim. Their main objective is to claim dominance over Islam by all possible means. In other words, the same Qur'anic text in Arabic has at least several dozen significantly different interpretations, which needless to say, are based on the intellectual limitations of the translator and the stage of understanding amongst his contemporaries. The Muslims are bitterly divided and in utter spiritual chaos, frantically awaiting the Messiah to guide them out of this morass. They must resolve their intellectual differences to fully understand their faith. It is easy to comprehend that there can only be one correct interpretation of the Qur'an and it will be the Messiah's role to provide it. This is exactly what Jesus did for the Jews - he reinterpreted and restored the Mosaic Law, the original essence of which had been lost and reduced to myth and dogma. The role of Messiahs in all faiths has to be the same.

Thus, the importance of the reference to Jesus, son of Mary, as the Muslim Messiah is to show the similarity of purpose. Over the centuries, Muslims have come to accept that no other prophet can come after Prophet Mohammadsa because they believe he was the "Seal (meaning absolute end) of Prophets." This is contrary to Qur'anic teachings and the Prophet's traditions. Paradoxically, they also accept that the awaited Messiah and Mehdi would be appointed and guided by God for reforming them in the latter days. By accepting belief in a God appointed Messiah and Mehdi, they default into accepting the person(s) as prophet(s) because a God- appointed person, charged with conveying guidance to people, has to be a prophet (not necessarily true – consider mujaddids & ulema). Of the five fundamental articles of belief mentioned in the Qur'an, only one is human and that is prophets (the other being God, Angels, Revealed Books, Day of Judgment). The Muslims' dilemma can be explained by the concept of a subordinate prophet, like Jesus, whose only role will be to reinterpret the Qur'an like Jesus did to the Law of Moses. Thus the title "Seal of the Prophets" for Prophet Mohammadsa can be interpreted to mean "authentication of all earlier prophets" because the Law he brought is comprehensive and encompasses all previous Laws. The Qur'an asserts this position and is not contrary to the coming of the Messiah as a subordinate prophet.

The other question regarding Jesus' crucifixion, ascension and second coming in the latter days is discussed elsewhere.7 Suffice it to say, that Jesus^{as} did not die on the cross but was taken down alive after 3-4 hours. As part of the great Divine plan, he had to fulfill his mission by preaching to the twelve tribes of Israel (ten of which had been exiled "East of the Euphrates" as prisoners by the Babylonians before Jesus' birth and are known as "the lost tribes"). After surviving the cross, Jesus^{as} traveled east through Afghanistan to Kashmir in India where those "lost tribes" had settled. He preached to them and died a natural death and is buried near Srinagar in Kashmir (India). Accepting that would further reinforce the concept of the spiritual second coming. Per the New Testament, 8 Jesus as prophesied that "all tribes of the world will mourn" on his second coming. This prophecy is significant as it does not exclude any group or tribe from mourning, even those that existed before his second coming, even those that had accepted him as the Jewish Messiah when he made the initial claim. One logical interpretation of this prophecy can be that each tribe or group will realize their folly after Jesus'as second coming that they will mourn their misunderstanding of his message. Jesus^{as} will assemble a new following from among the believers and that new tribe will spread his message.

Thus, the mystery about each religion's Messiah descending from the heavens to defeat the opposing Messiah and proclaim victory and lead their followers to salvation is simply a myth. Earlier religions, the scope of which were regional and meant for specific

people, have been updated and superseded by Islam – a message which not only authenticates them, but upholds their prophets' righteousness. Hence, it is logical to conclude that only one comprehensive Messiah is required to reform the world in the latter days through logic and reasoning, rather than mythology and dogma. This is the only way to satisfy the goal of religion for promoting brotherhood among humans, to coexist in peace, and exhibiting manifestation of God's attributes. That is the only way of achieving the ultimate objective for the creation of human beings. ¹ ◆

Appendix 1

Excerpts from English Translation of a Hindi article by Pundit Vaid Parkash of Illahabad University, India; translated by Mir Abdul Majid and published in October 1997 in Message magazine.

The Last Kalki Autar (Messenger) that the Veda has foretold and who is waited on by Hindus is the Prophet Muhammad $^{\rm sa}$ ibn Abdullah

[...] The author of this important research work "Kalki Autar" i.e. "guide and Prophet of whole universe" comes of a Bengali race and holds an important portfolio at Illahabad University. Pundit Vaid Parkash is a Brahman Hindu and a well known Sanskrit scholar and research worker. Pundit Vaid Parkash, after a great deal of toil and hard-work, presented the work to as many as eight great Pundits who are themselves very well known in the field of research in India, and are amongst the learned religious leaders. Their Pundits, after thorough study of the book, have acknowledged this to be true and authentic

research work. Important religious books of India mention the guide and prophet by the specific name of "Kalki Autar" it denotes the great man Muhammed (saw) who was born in Makkah. [...] As an argument to prove the authenticity of his research, Pundit Vaid Parkash quotes from the Veda, a sacred book among Hindus:

- Veda mentions that 'Kalki Autar' will be the last Messenger/Prophet of Bhagwan (Allah) to guide the whole world. After quoting this reference the Pundit Parkash says that this comes true only in the case of Muhammed (saw).
- According to a prophecy of Hinduism, 'Kalki Autar' will be born in an island and that is the Arab territory which is known as 'jazeeratul Arab'.
- 3. In the 'sacred' book of Hindus the father's name of 'Kalki Autar' is mentioned as 'Vishnu Bhagat' and his mother's name as 'somanib'. In Sanskrit, 'Vishnu' stands for Allah (saw) and the literal meaning of 'bhagat' is slave. 'Vishnu Bhagat' therefore, in the Arabic language will mean Allah's slave (Abdullah). 'Somanib' in Sanskrit means peace and tranquility which in Arabic is denoted by the word 'Amina'. Whereas the last Messenger Mohammed's (saw) father and mother's names were Abdullah and Amina respectively.
- 4. In the big books of Hindus, it is mentioned that 'Kalki Autar' will live on olive and dates and he will be true to his words and honest. In this regard Pundit Parkash writes, "This is true and established only in the case of Muhammed (saw)".
- 5. Veda mentions that 'Kalki Autar' will be born in the respected and noble dynasty of his land. And this is also true as regards Muhammed (saw) as he was born in the respected tribe of Quraish who enjoyed great respect and high place in Makkah.
- 6. 'Kalki Autar' will be taught in the cave by Bhagwan through his own messenger. And it is very true in this matter. Muhammed (saw) was the only one person in Makkah who has taught by Allah's Messenger Gabriel in the cave of Hira.
- It is written in the books which Hindus believe that Bhagwan will provide 'Kalki Autar' with the fastest of a horse and with the help of which he will ride around the world and the seven skies/

heavens. The riding on 'Buraq' and 'Meraj' by the Prophet Muhammed (saw) proves what?

- 8. It is also written in the Hindus' books that 'Kalki Autar' will be strengthened and heavily helped by Bhagwan. And we know this fact that Muhammed (saw) was aided and reinforced by Allah (saw) through His angels in the battle of Badr.
- 9. Hindus' books also mention that 'Kalki Autar' will be an expert in horse riding, arrow shooting, and swordsmanship. What Pundit Vaid Parkash comments in this regard is very important and worth attention and consideration. He writes that the age of horses, swords, and spears is long ago gone and now is the age of modern weapons like tanks, missiles, and guns, and therefore it will be unwise to wait for 'Kalki Autar' bearing sword and arrows or spears. In reality, the mention in our books of 'Kalki Autar' is clearly indicative of Muhammed (saw) who was given the heavenly book known as Al-Our'an.

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To Marry or Not to Marry, According to the Bible

"The Lord came unto the prophet Jeremiah and expressly forbade him to marry and have children" (Jer. 16:1-2).

"He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (1 Cor. 7:32, 33).

"He who marries does the right thing but he who does not marry does better" (1 Cor.7:38);

"It is better not to marry" (Matt. 19:10). "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage; But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Luke 20:34-35).

ATHEISM Nietzshe & Dawkins By Zia H. Shah, MD

"Surely, Prayer restrains one from indecency and manifest evil; and the remembrance of Allah is the greatest virtue. And Allah knows what you do."

Holy Qurán 29:46

"By the Time, Surely, man is ever in a state of loss, Except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and exhort one another to preach Truth, and exhort one another to be steadfast."

Holy Qurán 103:2-4

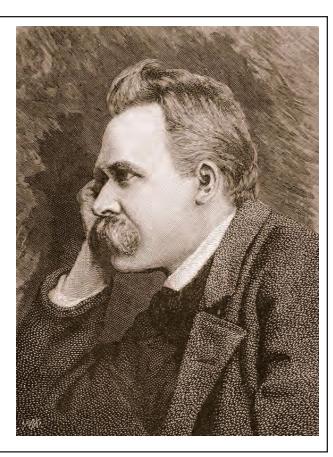
"Freud has unfortunately overlooked the fact that man has never yet been able single handed to hold his own against the powers of darkness — that is, of the unconscious. Man has always stood in need of the spiritual help which each individual's own religion held out to him." 1 —Carl Jung

Introduction

Professor Richard Dawkins in his 2006 book, the Delusion of God, makes a case for his belief in atheism and launches sweeping criticisms against all monotheistic religions. Dawkins describes that one of the goals of the book is to raise the atheist pride. He writes, "Being an atheist is nothing to be apologetic about. On the contrary, it is something to be proud of, standing tall to face the far horizon, for atheism nearly always indicates a healthy independence of mind and, indeed, a healthy mind." We shall examine, how much (unclear...how much of what?) that can be supported with facts.

"When you stare into the abyss the abyss stares back at you."

— Friedrich Nietzsche



Dawkins claims that God is not needed to have morality. The verses quoted in the start of the article would suggest otherwise. However, as some of the readership may be non-Muslim it would be worthwhile to argue from secular philosophies also. Dawkins' tall claims reminded me of Nietzsche. Comparing the ideas of the two will clarify the issue and help refute the claims in chapters six and seven of Dawkins' book, pertaining to morality.

Nietzshe

"When you stare into the abyss the abyss stares back at you." —Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche was a German classical scholar, philosopher, and critic of culture, who became one of the most influential modern thinkers. His attempts to unmask the motives that underlie traditional Western religion, morality, and philosophy deeply affected generations of theologians and philosophers. He died in 1900 AD. He fully realized that all human societies owed their moral teachings to religions and their concepts of God. His main focus, of course, was Christianity, and how it was impacted by the progress of science.

Let us review Nietzsche's story of the mad-

man. It is quoted in its entirety in the book The Meaning of Life, edited by ED Klemke.⁴ "The madman in the early morning hours burst into the marketplace, lantern in hand, crying, 'I seek God! I seek God!' Since many of those standing about did not believe in God, he provoked much laughter. 'Did God get lost?' they taunted him. 'Or is he hiding? Or maybe he has gone on a voyage or emigrated!' Thus they yelled and laughed. Then, writes Nietzsche, the madman turned in their midst and pierced them with his eyes.

"Whither is God?' he cried, 'I shall tell you. We have killed Him, you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon?

What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear

anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? [...] God is dead [...] And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves?"⁵

"The crowd stared at the madman in silence and astonishment. At last he dashed his lantern to the ground. 'I have come too early,' he said. 'This tremendous event is still on its way - it has not yet reached the ears of man.' Men did not yet truly comprehend the consequences of what they had done in killing God. But Nietzsche predicted that someday people would realize the implications of their atheism; and this realization would usher in an age of nihilism - the destruction of all meaning and value in life. The end of Christianity, wrote Nietzsche, means the advent of nihilism. This most gruesome of guests is standing already at the door."

In the words of William Lane Craig, Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, California, "Most people still do not reflect on the consequences of atheism and so, like the crowd in the marketplace, go unknowingly on their way. But when we realize, as did Nietzsche, what atheism implies, then his question presses hard upon us: how shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves?"⁷

Friedrich Nietzsche, after analyzing the secular philosophy of Europe declared in his dramatic style, "God is dead." This was a profound statement that helped him and others think through the consequences of the triumph of the Enlightenment's secularism. What was not immediately obvious, however, was that if God be dead then so is humanity. Without God humanity has no morality or any humanistic values left. Men did not, in Nietzsche's time, appreciate fully the consequences of what they had done in killing God. But Nietzsche was smart enough to predict that some day people will wake up to fully realize the implications of their atheism. "Our whole European culture is moving for some time now," wrote Nietzsche with his saber-like pen, "with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade, as toward a catastrophe: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect."8

This was as if Nietzsche was waking up from a nightmare with full realization of the natural results of lack of belief in God as described in the following Qur'anic verse in Sura Hashr: "And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He caused them to forget their own souls. It is they that are the transgressors." (59:20)

For centuries religion significantly influenced human behavior. That gradually eroded in the last century in line with Nietzshe's predictions! In July of 2007, myspace.com announced that the online site has found more than 29,000 registered sex offenders among its 180 million members. This may only be the tip of the iceberg. In the last three decades 65 million people have condemned themselves to capital punishment through HIV. HIV/AIDS represents the single greatest humanitarian crisis in modern history. Since the beginning of the epidemic nearly 20 million people have died from the disease. By the end of 2003 over 40 million people were living with HIV/AIDS around the world, including 5 million people who acquired HIV that year. Current projections indicate that an additional 45 million people will become infected by 2010. What leads to such large scale self condemnation?⁹

Sexual Addiction

The following table examines the prevalence of HIV in different African countries and their religious affiliations. The countries are arranged in decreasing order of HIV prevalence. The HIV data is gathered from US Doctors for Africa website, USDFA.org. 10

It is amply clear from the chart that HIV prevalence decreases as Muslim proportions of the population increase. The seven countries with the least prevalence and the maximum prevalence are in bold fonts for convenience of comparison. There is a strong correlation between the

Countries HI	V prevalence	Muslims	Christians	Others
Botswana	38.80%	0.20%	70.00%	29.80%
Swaziland	33.40%	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%
Zimbabwe	33.70%	1.00%	75.00%	24.00%
Lesotho	31.00%	0.00%	78.00%	22.00%
Namibia	22.50%	0.00%	80.00%	20.00%
Zambia	21.50%	1.40%	85.00%	13.60%
South Africa	20.00%	1.50%	79.50%	19.00%
Kenya	15.00%	10.00%	80.00%	10.00%
Mozambique	13.00%	18.00%	41.00%	41.00%
Central African Republic	13.00%	16.00%	70.00%	14.00%
Cameroon	11.90%	25.00%	69.00%	6.00%
Côte d'Ivoire	9.70%	38.00%	32.00%	30.00%
Liberia	9.00%	20.00%	40.00%	40.00%
Gabon	9.00%	7.00%	78.00%	15.00%
Rwanda	9.00%	11.00%	81.00%	8.00%
Burundi	8.00%	3.00%	90.00%	7.00%
Tanzania	8.00%	35.00%	30.00%	35.00%
Republic of Congo	7.20%	1.00%	91.00%	8.00%
Sierra Leone	7.00%	60.00%	10.00%	30.00%
Ethiopia	6.00%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Burkina Faso	6.00%	50.00%	18.00%	32.00%
Togo	6.00%	24.00%	51.00%	25.00%
Angola	5.50%	0.00%	94.00%	6.00%
Nigeria	5.80%	50.00%	40.00%	10.00%
Uganda	5.00%	16.00%	66.00%	18.00%
Democratic Rep of Cong	o 4.90%	10.00%	70.00%	20.00%
Niger	4.00%	98.00%	0.00%	2.00%
Chad	3.60%	55.00%	28.00%	17.00%
Benin	3.60%	20.00%	30.00%	50.00%
Ghana	3.00%	16.00%	63.00%	21.00%
Eriteria	2.80%	48.00%	47.00%	5.00%
Sudan	2.60%	70.00%	5.00%	25.00%
Mali	1.70%	87.00%	2.00%	11.00%
Muritania	1.80%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Guinea	1.54%	85.00%	0.00%	15.00%
Somalia	1.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Senegal	1.00%	94.00%	5.00%	1.00%
Egypt	<1.00%	90.00%	10.00%	0.00%
Libya	0.20%	97.00%	3.00%	0.00%
Morocco	0.10%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Algeria	0.10%	97.00%	0.00%	3.00%
Tunisia	0.10%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Sources: http://www.globalintegrity.org/reports/2006, http://www.24-7prayer.com/ow/index.php				

influence of Islam on people's moral behavior and HIV prevalence. It is sufficiently clear from this data that Islamic teachings of sexual morality have had a very positive impact on African society.

This epidemic has caused immense human suffering. The manifestations are slightly different from country to country. For example, Zambia does not have the highest overall prevalence but has the highest level of AIDS orphans in the world (over 650,000). Families are overstretched and too poor to look after all of them -90,000 are left to live on the streets.

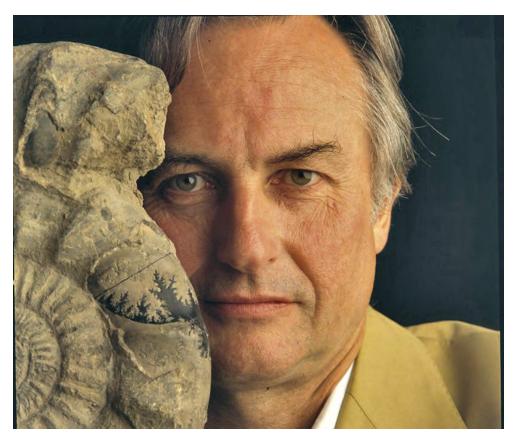
Psychiatric research now suggests that sexual promiscuity is a form of addiction like other forms of addiction including alcoholism. In other articles we will establish the best solution to addictions is belief in a supernatural being or God. Secular treatments are limited.

Let no one take refuge in an assumption that the consequences of immorality are for Africa only. Our country, United States of America is not immune from it. The manifestations are different but the consequences are similar. It is easy for anyone to do a quick search on the prevalence of different sexually transmitted diseases and prevalence of domestic abuse and sexual abuse of the children.

No Absolute Standards for Morals without God

In the words of William Lane Craig, "If there is no God, then there can be no objective standards of right and wrong. All we are confronted with is, in Jean-Paul Sartre's words, the bare, valueless fact of existence. Moral values are either just expressions of personal taste or the by-products of sociobiological evolution and conditioning. In the words of one humanist philosopher, 'The moral principles that govern our behavior are rooted in habit and custom, feeling and fashion.' In a world without God, who is to say which values are right and which are wrong? Who is to judge that the values of Adolf Hitler are inferior to those of a saint?"

The concept of morality loses all meaning in a universe without God. As one contemporary atheist ethicist points out, "To say that something is wrong because [...] it is forbidden by God, is [...] perfectly understandable to anyone who believes in a



Professor Richard Dawkins in his 2006 book, the Delusion of God, makes a case for his belief in atheism and launches sweeping criticisms against all monotheistic religions.

In a world without God, there can be no objective right and wrong, only our culturally and personally relative, subjective judgments. It would be impossible to condemn war, oppression, or crime as evil.

law-giving God. But to say that something is wrong [...] even though no God exists to forbid it, is not understandable. [...] The concept of moral obligation is unintelligible apart from the idea of God. The words remain but their meaning is gone."

In a world without God, there can be no objective right and wrong, only our culturally and personally relative, subjective judgments. It would be impossible to condemn war, oppression, or crime as evil. One could not praise brotherhood, equality, and love as good. Good and evil could not exist in a universe without God - only the bare valueless fact of existence, and there is no one to say you are right and I am wrong.

If our moral rules do not proceed from something outside us in the nature of the universe, whether we say it is God or simply the universe itself, then they must be our own inventions. Thus it came to be believed that moral rules must be merely an expression of our own likes and dislikes. But likes and dislikes are notoriously variable. What pleases one man, people, or culture displeases another. Therefore morals are wholly relative. "This obvious conclusion from the idea of a purposeless world made its appearance in Europe immediately after the rise of science, for instance in the philosophy of Hobbes. Hobbes saw at once that if there is no purpose in the world there are no values either. 'Good and, evil,' he writes, 'are names that signify our appetites and aversions; which in different tempers, customs, and doctrines of men are different. [...] Every man calleth that which pleaseth him, good; and that which displeaseth him, evil."11

In the words of Walter T. Stace, who taught theory of knowledge and metaphysics at Princeton University, "This doctrine of the relativity of morals, though it has recently received an impetus from the studies of anthropologists, was thus really implicit in the whole scientific mentality. It is disastrous for morals because it destroys their entire traditional foundation. That is why philosophers who see the danger signals, from the time at least of Kant, have been trying to give to morals a new foundation, that is, a secular or non-religious foundation. This attempt may very well be intellectually successful. Such a foundation, independent of the religious view of the world, might well be found. But the question is whether it can ever be a practical success, that is, whether apart from its logical validity and its influence with intellectuals, it can ever replace among the masses of men the lost religious foundation. On that question hangs perhaps the future of civilization. But meanwhile disaster is overtaking us."12

Yet More Refutations of **Dawkins**

Do we really need policing whether by God or by each other - in order to stop us from behaving in a selfish and criminal manner? The answer is apparently clear to those who had seen the events of Katrina and lawlessness in New Orleans unfold on the television screen in 2005. Others may recall earlier events like the black out in New York City when electricity was cut off. For a less commonly known example, listen to Steven Pinker's disillusioning experience of a police strike in Montreal, which he describes in The Blank Slate:

"As a young teenager in proudly peaceable Canada during the romantic 1960s, I was a true believer in Bakunin's anarchism. I laughed off my parents' argument that if the government ever laid down its arms all hell would break loose. Our competing predictions were put to the test at 8:00 A.M. on October 17, 1969, when the Montreal police went on strike. By 11:20 A.M. the first bank was robbed. By noon most downtown stores had closed because of looting. Within a few more hours, taxi drivers burned down the garage of a limousine service that competed with them for airport customers, a rooftop

Do we really need policing whether by God or by each other - in order to stop us from behaving in a selfish and criminal manner?

sniper killed a provincial police officer, rioters broke into several hotels and restaurants, and a doctor slew a burglar in his suburban home. By the end of the day, six banks had been robbed, a hundred shops had been looted, twelve fires had been set, 40 carloads of storefront glass had been broken, and three million dollars in property damage had been inflicted, before city authorities had to call in the army and, of course, the Mounties to restore order. This decisive empirical test left my politics in tatters..."13

Wasn't the Montreal strike a pretty good experiment to test the hypothesis that belief in God makes us good? Just like the fear of police is a deterrent, so is the fear of All Knowing God for those who truly believe.

Conclusion

Is belief in God or Allah a pre-requisite for maintaining high moral standards in a society? Should we believe Nietzsche or Dawkins? Nietzsche says that atheism slowly degenerates humanity and Dawkins thinks that atheism is uplifting. The testimonies of the Holy Qur'an, logic, common sense and data certainly support Nietzsche. Nietzsche wins and Dawkins loses! But the real loser is the humanity, unless they pay heed to the Quranic teaching of Sura Al Asar mentioned in the beginning of the article.

Regardless of the origin of the human conscience, one can yield to the atheists that human conscience is common between the religious and them. It does indeed provide some degree of inertia for them from gradually going downhill on a moral scale. What is, however, not shared by them is the concept of a Living God who is All Aware of human actions and holds them accountable. This additional force is there in the case of a true believer but completely absent in the case of an atheist and partially absent in believers with atheistic ten-The other important issue in which an atheist may be lacking is the concept of absolute standards. An atheist's mind is on a relative scale, with no certain yard stick of what is right or wrong.

Many of those who grew up in the West, seem to have a tendency to limit their choices between Christianity and atheism. Christianity is not satisfying to a developed mind which cannot put its reason or science in a separate box. This limitation of Christianity puts them in a catch 22 or double bind situation. The only way out is the religion of Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. Islam in its pure form as presented by the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam should be considered as a distinct solution to our contemporary problems. In the words of Sir George Bernard Shaw, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925, "I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him - the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity."14 At another occasion he said, "I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad, that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today."15

(Endnotes)

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 ¹⁵ Sir George Bernard Shaw in 'The Genuine Islam,' Vol. 1, No. 8, 1936.

The Friday Sermon

Delivered on August 24, 2007

Do, then, those who devise evil plans, feel secure that Allah will humiliate them in their own land, or that the punishment will not come upon them whence they do not know?

Surah Al-Nahl 16:46

Khalifatul Masih V delivered his Friday Sermon from Bait ul Noor, Holland. Khalifatul Masih V cited verse 46 of Surah Al Nahl (16:46) and gave a discourse on increasing materialism, non-belief, natural disasters and Divine chastisement.

Khalifatul Masih V said increasing materialism has taken mankind away from moral values, religion and God. There are very few people who appreciate that all the blessings in this world are from God and it is Him alone who has given man the capacity to invent things to facilitate convenience and safety. Rather than be grateful people are increasingly opting for self-gratification and religion and God are subject to open derision. Atheism is on the increase and books purporting it are best-sellers. Many of these people are helpless in the sense that their religion has not given them the inner-peace that can not be attained apart from the One, Living God. There is also a section of people who are so prejudiced against Islam that they daily churn out objections about Islam as well as the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) in avant-garde ways. They associate extremely far-fetched things with the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be on him).



There are very few people who appreciate that all the blessings in this world are from God and it is Him alone who has given man the capacity to invent things to facilitate convenience and safety. Rather than be grateful people are increasingly opting for self-gratification and religion and God are subject to open derision.

The fact is that they can see that Islam is the only religion that presents a real concept of religion. It is shocking how some among them, the so-called enlightened, upholders of freedom and 'non-interfering' people have exceeded all limits in their disrespect of Islam.

As most of you must already know, a politician from here (Holland) called Geert Wilders has gone to the extent of calling for the ban of the Holy Qur'an. He has maintained that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) acquired an extremist personality with the passing of age, especially during his time in Medina. He also maintains that Surah Taubah (9:5) incites to violence against the Jews and Christians adding that the Qur'an does not have any concept of separation between religion and politics

and that Qur'an itself is based on aggression and extremism. He said he is fed up with worship of God in Holland.

Khalifatul Masih V said Geert Wilder's objection that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was inclined to extremism with age is simply a reflection of his extreme bias. Clearly he has not read the Qur'an and is defacing history based on hearsay. Explaining, Khalifatul Masih V said, what is the teaching in Surah Al Maidah (Chapter V); a Surah revealed after Hijrah, and which all traditions indicate to have been revealed in the last year of the life of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Indeed the Surah says "...And let not the enmity of a people...incite you to transgress..." (5:3). Those who are blind cannot see the light.

"And when the forbidden months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever you find them and take them captive, and beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent and observe Prayer and pay the Zakaat, then leave their way free. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful."

Surah Taubah 9:5

As regards Surah Taubah, Khalifatul Masih V said if it is seen abandoing the obvious bias and prejudice it will be clear that here permission to fight those hypocrites is being given who would not desist and who continued to create disorder. [The verse] refers to the fact that as the Islamic rule was established and the hypocrites continued to flame the fan of hostility, Muslims should fight them.

Khalifatul Masih V said if according to [Geert Wilders] there should be a free reign in a situation such as described above then maybe he ought to introduce legislation in his country of unbridled liberty.

Khalifatul Masih V said time to time an upsurge against Islam emerges in Holland, however, it does not signify that the entire Dutch people. Indeed many prominent Dutch people responded against Mr. Wilders' statement. Khalifatul Masih V enumerated a few statements from political figures which denounced Mr. Wilders and added that a foreign affairs minister had said that Holland had no plans to ban the Holy Qur'an.

Khalifatul Masih V said it is the obligation of each Ahmadi to not only respond and refute the objections raised by the opponents but also to thank those who still uphold high moral

values. Khalifatul Masih V said the message of God should be taken to people and the reasons of the chaos in the world explained to them; it should be explained to them that peace of mind is not in the bedazzlement of this world, or in intoxicants, it is only to be found in turning to God. Those who exceed all limits and in particular show aggression to Islam should also be reached and told not to provoke the sense of honour of God. Explain to them the natural disasters occurring around the world are a warning that no one is safe in the world. Khalifatul Masih V said most of Holland is below sea-level any way. Following a massive flood in 1953 the government launched construction designed against the threat of flood. It is known as Delta Works.

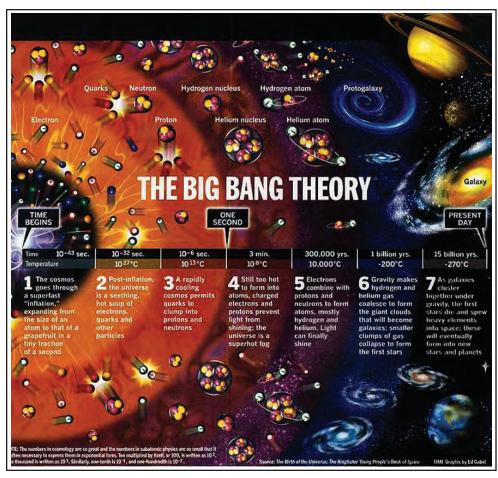
Khalifatul Masih V said that he went to visit Delta Works where the engineer/ guide told him that they have protected their country against floods to which Khalifatul Masih V responded that indeed they had but only made the best attempt to protect against flooding and that complete protection is only with God. Khalifatul Masih V said he agreed and all his subsequent talk referred to Delta Works as an 'attempt' and he thus affirmed the existence of God four or five times. Khalifatul Masih V said his remarks in the visitor's book were that the Delta Works is indeed a good human endeavor and a tremendous plan, however, it should always be borne in mind that the real planning is God's and in order to be really protected remembrance of God is required.

Khalifatul Masih V said the world is deeply absorbed in materialism, both in the East and the West, then there is the vulgarity. All this provokes the wrath of God. Each Ahmadi should take the message of Islam to the world, to the Muslims as well, who reject the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) despite the signs of his truthfulness. Khalifatul Masih V said a review of the last 100 years shows that natural disasters occurring in this period were far greater in number than natural disasters occurring in the previous 1,200 years. This year again, Khalifatul Masih V said there have been so many natural disasters. This is a warning. An Ahmadi,

having brought about a pure change in himself/herself, needs to take this message to the world. Khalifatul Masih V enumerated all the disasters occurring around the world in this year so far. These included floods and earthquakes in Indonesia in February, a huge earthquake in the Solomen Islands, floods in Pakistan, hundreds of thousand effected in Baluchistan. Then there was flooding in Bangladesh (June) as indeed there was in India (July). The UK too had extensive flooding in July. Then there was huge earthquake in Japan. A natural disaster occurred in USA in August, there were floods in China, heavy rainfalls and flooding in N. Korea and the Peru earthquake, more flooding in Pakistan. In Australia natural disasters caused havoc with the motorways. There was horrendous rainfall in Burkina Faso; a hurricane caused havoc in Hawaii as well an earthquake. An unprecedented tropical cyclone occurred in the Arabian Sea, there was a tornado in Alabama USA and flooding in South Africa.

All this, Khalifatul Masih V said is indicative that Allah's decree is on in motion that that people should take note and not exceed limits, just as Khalifatul Masih V said the Qur'anic verse he cited at the beginning of the sermon refers to. Lessons should be learnt from these relatively smaller natural disasters by people from the East and the West and people of all religions. Khalifatul Masih V said indeed the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) had said that had his advent not taken place the [natural] disasters could have been deferred. otherwise he had indeed declared that Europe, Asia or the Oceania, none were safe, that Allah was unhurried in His wrath and people should pay heed so that they are shown mercy.

Khalifatul Masih V said we need to take this message to everyone. May we also be enabled to understand and comprehend the True God and may the world also be able to do so, in that His mercy, rather than His wrath may be attained. •



"Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were a closed-up mass, then We clove them asunder? And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?"

Holy Qurán: 21:31

Predicting Earth's Life Expectancy:

Scientific theories about the end of the world

By Aasim Ahmad

Recorded human history bears the scars of men and women who struggled to understand the creation and destruction of the earth. They stretched the borders of their minds to make sense of the gaps between what they saw and what they believed. Myth making became the art of filling those gaps. Recent history has allowed scientists to fight back with explanations of their own. Eager to leave their historical legacy, scientists have developed several theories to explain creation and the inevitable end of times. These theories offer a fresh interpretation of the miraculous verses of the Qur'an.

Scientists have spent much time experimenting and theorizing about the beginning

of the earth and the universe. They conclude the entire universe formed from a very hot spherical object, containing a combination of primordial elements and the forces presently known to the world. It is generally accepted that the universe began to form following the "Big Bang," a term describing the explosion of everything within the previously mentioned sphere. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad RA felt God encapsulated this theory 1,400 years ago in verse 21:31 of the Qur'an which states, "Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were a closed-up mass, then We clove them asunder? And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?"

Since the Big Bang the universe has been expanding and growing to what it is today, a concept also mentioned in the Qur'an verse 51:48: "And the heaven We built with Our Own powers and indeed We go on expanding it"

Countless fields of science including paleontology and earth science focus on understanding the past. Paleontologists examine the fossil record and determine the age and structure of extinct species. In doing so, paleontologists have introduced the idea of Pangaea. Pangaea is a term that describes the earth pre-historically as one huge landmass. Evidence of this probability lies in the fact that similar fossils of extinct animals and plants have been found on the coasts of countries separated by today's oceans. Consequently, with so many theories about the beginning of time, scholars and intellectuals have naturally begun to ask the inevitable, "When will it end?"

The earth, as man knows it, has existed approximately 4.5 billion years. Throughout this existence, it has suffered countless collisions with asteroids and meteors, which is evident in its terrain. One of the most apparent problems for the earth is being hit by an asteroid large enough to upset the natural forces that work in our small world. The asteroid belt between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter is one of the reasons asteroids pose a real threat to the earth. It is generally agreed by scientists that such an incident played an important part in the extinction of the dinosaurs. This type of collision has the immediate potential of wiping out entire continents, and the resurgence of another ice age. An asteroid merely 15 kilometers wide or larger has a potential similar to this and possibly greater. If an asteroid of this size were to hit San Francisco, the effects would reach New York in a matter of hours. The collision would completely obliterate San Francisco on impact and carve out a crater 181 kilometers wide. Though the probability of such an event is not high, if it were to occur, it would not be missed by any conscious thing on the planet. The only way to avoid this catastrophe successfully is to alter the path of the asteroid enough so that it does not get pulled into the earth's gravitational field.

Other than asteroids and comets, the earth has a few other cosmic catastrophes to fear. One of the most powerful devastations is a gamma ray burst. A gamma ray burst is a surge of energy emitted from the poles of a collapsing Giant Star, which then becomes a black hole. Such an event, con-

sidering the blast hit the earth, would chemically alter the atmosphere by tearing apart oxygen and nitrogen molecules. The end result would destroy the ozone layer and give the sun free reign to pound all life with massive doses of ultraviolet radiation. The oxygen and nitrogen molecules would form nitrogen oxides. Eventually, if enough of these dark gasses are created, the sky will darken and block out sunlight. The earth would be crippled by the destruction of the ozone as well as the lack of sunlight. A gamma ray burst has far greater destructive power than an asteroid because by the time a gamma ray is predicted to hit the earth it will be too late.

Another cosmic event that can wipe out man's existence originates with the very object that sustains it: the sun. Like everything else in the world, the sun is going to grow older and die. Eventually, the sun is going to burn up all of its readily available fuel (Hydrogen) and, consequently, collapse. Although the sun still has an estimated 5-6 billion years of life left, it will become too hot for life in a mere billion. A billion years from now the sun will become hot enough to burn up all the oceans and water sources on earth and mankind will die out soon afterwards, unless new technologies prevent such a catastrophe. The only method of survival is to leave the orbit of the sun; however, nearly all forms of life including man will still die, but later rather than sooner. The most apparent fate of the earth will most likely be destruction by the aging sun. The earth will ultimately fall apart and drift into space or be consumed by the sun.

A collision between galaxies is another potentially dangerous event for all life on earth. The Andromeda Galaxy and the Milky Way Galaxy are due for a collision within 3-4 billion years. A galactic collision is as amazing an event as it is violent. Two entire galaxies gradually pull together while whipping each other around. Eventually, it is very possible for the earth to spiral out of orbit and drift to the outer reaches of the Milky Way along with the sun. Consequently, the earth will likely become colder and the climate will shift dramatically. However, given the time period, life will already have been wiped off the face of the earth due to the inevitable effects from the sun.

Another cosmic event that has the potential to destroy life on earth is a nearby star undergoing supernova. When stars



go supernova it is more or less an explosion. When a star has consumed all of its energy, it reaches the end of its life. Unlike the situation with the sun, which only needs to become a red giant to obliterate the ozone, a nearby star must be at the very end of its life to affect the earth. The explosion does not need to be close enough to incinerate the planet. A nearby supernova need only send its harmful radiation to our atmosphere and take out enough of the ozone. The sun would complete the destruction with ultraviolet radiation. The unfortunate fact is that man is already weakening the ozone layer himself.

The cosmic events that will destroy the world are not bound to happen any time soon. Hundreds of years of scientific advancement are required to avoid the destructive powers of the sun and asteroids. Even with our current technology, scientists cannot track everything in space. For example, on March 8th 2002, an asteroid 50-100 meters wide passed near the earth without any detection un-

til 4 days after the fact. Whichever scientific explanation proves true, it supports the grim reminder in the Qur'an, "All that exists upon this earth is to perish, except for the Countenance of thy Lord, the Possessor of Glory, the Possessor of Honor." (55:27-28)

Although scientific theories of the earth's end are in their infancy, they all agree on one thing – it will happen. This is similar to the message the Qur'an conveys regarding our own lives. The question is not whether our lives will come to an end, but rather how and when. What we do from now until that point is completely and entirely up to us. However, as we live our lives, we cannot deny the awesome powers of the universe and our insignificance before them; yet we often overlook how much greater our insignificance in the Face of the One Who created them. Our boasts of our scientific progress, as if to compete with the Lord for praise, only confirms and adds to our insignificance in the grand scheme of His creation.

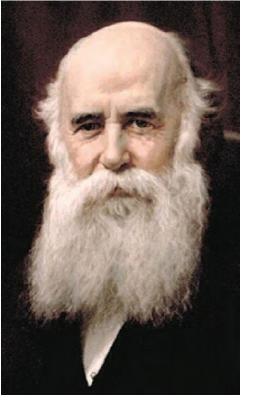


Dr. John Alexander Dowie, after founding the Christian Catholic Church in Zion, dreamed of a city where his congregation would be free from the evils of the world, a city where God would be the ruler. In the fall of 1899, Dowie visited the land north of Waukegan, Illinois between Chicago and Milwaukee, Wisconsin and envisioned what he would come to name "Zion City". After successfully securing options on approximately 6,600 acres of land, he unveiled his plan for Zion City on New Year's eve 1900.

It would be a city where his congregation could worship, work, and play free from the temptations of the world. There would be places of employment he imported a lace mill from England — schools, and recreational facilities, all controlled by Dowie. The land would be leased to the people, with definite restrictions, for 1,100 years. Dowie reasoned that Christ's return was to be within 100 years and then the millennium, after which there would be no need for leases.

Dowie

A false American prophet preparing the way for Christ's return to earth.



Proclaiming himself as
overseer of the city of Zion, it
was obvious that something
was amiss. Soon after some
ministers came to Dowie and
proclaimed that he was
Elijah foretold to come in the
bible. At first Dowie
denounced them, but the
words kept ringing in his
ears and sadly he embraced
it and called himself Elijah.

-- Five Fold Ministries

ohn Alexander Dowie was by birth a Scotsman. He was born in Edinburgh in 1847 and studied for the Church in his early years. In 1872 he went to Australia as a cleric and acquired a certain degree of reputation for healing. In 1888 he went over to the United States of America and started the publication of paper called Leaves of Healing. In 1896 he founded the Christian Catholic sect. In 1901 he started building a town in the State of Illinois which he called Zion City. He established many factories within the area of the town and became in effect the uncrowned king of Zion City. In the same year he claimed to be Elijah III.

Dowie was a bitter enemy of Islam and of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him. He gave repeated expression to his hostility towards Islam in his speeches and writings which were published in the Leaves of Healing. On one occasion he delivered himself of the following despicable verbal caricature of Islam:

I think of the falsehood of Muhammad with great contempt. If I were to accept those falsehoods I would have to believe that in this gathering and indeed in any part of God's earth there is no single woman who possesses an immortal soul. I would have to acknowledge that you women are but wild animals which can be used for an hour or a day as playthings and that you have no eternal existence, and that when those who are dominated by bestial passions have satisfied their lust with you, you would die the death of dogs. This would be your end. This is the religion of Muhammad (Leaves of Healing, Vol. VII, No.5, 26 May 1900).

On another occasion he said:

I warn the Christian people of America and Europe that Islam is not dead. Islam has great strength;, though Islam and Muhammadanism must be destroyed. The ruin of Islam will not be compassed through the supine Latin church or the powerless Greek church. (Leaves of Healing, 25 August 1900, p. 7)

Being provoked by his reviling of Islam and the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and his eagerness to destroy Islam and the Muslims, The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, of Qadian, India, confronted him with the following challenge in September 1902:

"As regards the Muslims, we wish to point out respectfully to Mr. Dowie that there is no need for the fulfillment of his purpose to subject millions of Muslims to destruction. There is a very easy way of determining whether Dowie's god is true or our God. That way is that Mr. Dowie need not repeatedly announce his prophecy of the destruction of all Muslims, but should keep me alone in his mind and should pray that of the two of us, the one who is false may die before the other. Dowie believes in Jesus as god and I consider him a humble creature and a prophet.

"The matter in issue is which of us two is in the right? Mr. Dowie should publish this prayer which should bear the testimony of at least one thousand persons. When the issue of the paper that contains this announcement reaches me I too will pray accordingly and shall append to my prayer the testimony of a thousand persons, if God so wills, I am sure that through the adoption of this course a way shall be opened for Mr. Dowie and all the Christians for the recognition of the truth.

"I have not been the first to propose such a prayer. It is Mr. Dowie who, through his announcements, has put himself in that position. Observing this, God, Who is jealous, has urged me towards this confrontation. It should be remembered that I am not just an average citizen of this country. I am the Promised Messiah, who is being awaited by Mr. Dowie. The only difference is that Mr. Dowie says that the Promised Messiah will appear within twenty-five years, and I proclaim that he has appeared already and that I am that person. Hundreds of Signs have appeared in my support in the earth and from heaven. My Community numbers approximately a hundred thousand and is rapidly increasing.

"The method I propose is that Mr. Dowie should come into the field against me with the permission of his false god. I am an old man of more than sixty-six years of age. I suffer from diabetes, dysentery, migraine, and deficiency of blood. I realize, however that my life depends not upon the condition of my health but upon the command of God. If the false god of Mr. Dowie possesses any power he will certainly permit him to come forth against me. If instead of the destruction of all the Muslims Mr. Dowie's purpose can be served by my death alone, he will have established a great sign, in consequence of which millions of people will acknowledge the son of Mary as god and will also believe in Dowie as his apostle. I affirm it truly that if the disgust that the Muslims of the world feel towards the god of the Christians were to be placed on one side of the scale and the disgust that I feel towards him were to be placed on the other side of the scale my disgust would be found to be heavier than the disgust of all the Muslims of the world. The truth is that Jesus son of Mary is from me and I am from God. Blessed is he who recognizes me and most unfortunate is he from whose eye I am hidden." (Review of Religions, Urdu, Vol. I, No.9, pp. 342-348). The excerpts in this article were taken from the book, Ahmadiyyat: The Renaissance of Islam by Muhammad Zafrulla Khan. The book can be found at www.alislam.org.

Dowie's death, a grand prophecy

Thus the issue was squarely joined between Ahmad and Dowie. From that moment Dowie entered upon a progressive decline of all his affairs. His health began to deteriorate, his followers began to have doubts and questioned his claims, he began to encounter financial difficulties. In 1905 he suffered a severe stroke of paralysis and was directed by his physician to move to a warmer climate. He was taken to Mexico and later to Jamaica. The affairs of Zion were handed over to a nominee of his who soon turned against him. His wife and children deserted him and he was charged with diverse illicit and immoral practices. On March 9, 1907 he died a miserable death, The prophecy of Ahmad was truly and completely fulfilled. The exchange was covered by not only the Herald, but by a number of other newspapers of the United States, such as:

- * The Chicago Inter Ocean, June 28, 1903
- * The Telegraph, July 5, 1903
- * The Literary Digest, June 20, 1903
- * The New York Mail & Express, June 25, 1903
- * The Herald Rochester, June 25, 1903
- * The Record Boston, June 27, 1903
- * The Advertiser Boston, June 25, 1903
- * The Pilot Boston, June 27, 1903
- * The Pathfinder Washington, June 27, 1903
- * The Detroit English News, June 27, 1903
- * The Democratic Chronicle Rochester, June 25, 1903
- * The Burlington Free Press, June 27, 1903
- * The Albany Press, June 25, 1903
- * The Baltimore American, June 28, 1903
- * The Buffalo Times, June 25, 1903
- st The Groomshire Gazette, July 17, 1903
- * The Houston Chronicle, July 3, 1903
- * The Trichmond News, July 1, 1903
- * The Argunaut San Francisco, Dec. 1, 1903

See: The Sunday Herald--Boston, June 23, 1907, Magazine Section.

The Danville Gazette of 7, June 1907 wrote:

'Ahmad and his adherents may be pardoned for taking some credit for the accuracy with which the prophecy was fulfilled a few months ago.'

The Truth-Seeker of 15 June 1907 wrote

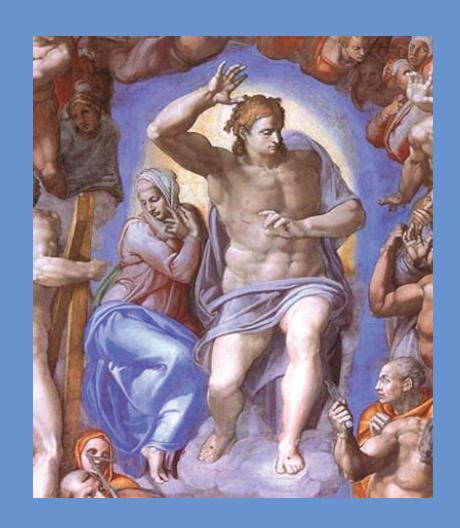
The Qadian man predicted that if Dowie accepted the challenge, he would leave the world before his eyes with great sorrow and torment. If Dowie declined, the Mirza said, the end would only be deferred; death awaited him just the same and calamity would soon overtake Zion. That was the grand prophecy: Zion would fall and Dowie would die before Ahmad.

The End is the Beginning, A Christian View of the End

By Rev. Diana Facemyer

he word we use is Eschatology. It means the study of last things; a study

of what God intends as history comes to an end and the promised "new reality" begins. That "new reality" envisioned by Christians is a world, an existence beyond this one, commonly referred to as Heaven. And the most glorious promise of Heaven to the Christian heart is that humanity will live fully in the presence of God who, at the end of history, will make His home among us. In that place of full restoration of God and God's creation, harmony among God's people and the natural order will be restored. War will be no more, fear will be no more, and all of creation will be absent any form of evil. The victory of good over evil will have been won. At the end of history, we will meet God. Christian Eschatology is not so much about what will happen and when it will happen (although people have spent much energy speculating on these things), Christian Eschatology is about whom we will meet.



And the most glorious promise of Heaven to the Christian heart is that humanity will live fully in the presence of God who, at the end of history, will make His home among us.

The book of Revelation is sited as the text most explicit in its eschatological themes. Revelation itself borrows from the images and themes of the Hebrew text of Daniel-language that would have been more familiar to first century Christians than to people today. But the intent of both texts are clear. Both Daniel and Revelation were written to encourage people who were experiencing persecution, oppression, and hardship to remain faithful to the God of their ancestors-to remain focused on God's sustaining presence and the promise of God (the good) who will one day defeat the power of evil. Those who remain faithful, the writer of Revelation says, will one day wear a crown of victory and be rewarded for their faithfulness by being brought into the presence of God, Himself.

From a Christian point of view, we are already living the "end of times," the "last days." This has been true since the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. His coming signaled the beginning of the end. That truth teaches us that we should know well both the value and the mystery of each day so we can live it in holy reverence and honor God with it. But as Jesus' life on earth came closer and closer to its end, the disciples were anxious to know Jesus' teachings about the "end times." "Tell us, when will it be, and what will be the signs of your coming, and of the end of the age?"(Matthew 24:3) Jesus' words were emphatic, yet many persist in missing them. Who knows when the end will come? Jesus answered, "But about that day and hour, no one knows, neither the angels of Heaven, not the Son, but only the Father." (Matthew 24: 36) To know the time and exact circumstance is God's business and God's business alone.

A precious expression of Christian Hope is in the return of Jesus Christ. This Hope is as old as the church itself. When the disciples saw their Lord ascend into Heaven 40 days after his resurrection, they were assured by two men in white robes, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into Heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into Heaven." (Acts 1:1) And so, it is that the church has believed that Jesus Christ would one day return and at that time receive all who have believed and who have lived their lives by faith, both the living and the dead. This second coming of Jesus has been seen either as the culmination of history and the beginning of the new creation or, as the announcement of that culmination giving believers still more time to turn their lives faith-ward.



Who knows when the end will come? Jesus answered, "But about that day and hour, no one knows, neither the angels of Heaven, not the Son, but only the Father."

(Matthew 24: 36)

Two great Creeds of the Church, the Apostles Creed and the Nicean Creed affirm this expectation of Jesus' return and in the "judgment" that will follow, where we shall meet the one in whom we have believed. Jesus himself spoke of that Day of Judgment when he warned, "I tell you, on the Day of Judgment, you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter." (Matthew 2: 36)

Jesus taught about the Day of Judgment in many of his parables. He spoke of it as a specific time of reckoning for individuals as well as nations. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and is seated on his throne, then all the nations will be gathered before him." (Matthew 25: 31-32)

Long held Christian teachings affirm: that Christ will return to judge the living and the dead; that all people who are believers will one day share eternity with Christ and fellowship with those who have believed, and that those who have rejected God and refused God's grace will be cut off from eternal fellowship with God. Christian teaching has not presumed to describe the details of what Heaven or hell will be like, has not presumed to know God's timeline for the culmination of history, and does not teach that any human being has the right to judge who will go to Heaven and who will not. Like a caterpillar trying to imagine what being a butterfly will be like, there is a lot we can not imagine about how the world will end and what life in its renewed form will be like. But we have these hopes:

- 1. That Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 11:25-26)
- 2. That our Lord promised. "In my father's house there are many rooms. When I go, I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, you may be also."
 (John 14: 1-4)
- 3. That in Jesus' second coming, the Day of Judgment there will be a reckoning. People will be judged by what they did with the possibilities entrusted to them and by how they treated their fellow human beings.
- 4. That human kind will endure much hardship and trial before the culmination of history. In the mean time, we are to remain faithful to God and know that no situation we face will be able to separate us from God's love and care. And that,
- One day all obstacles that now hinder us from experiencing the full presence of God will be gone and we will dwell forever in the embrace of God's love and in fellowship with one another.

Poetry Corner

"Qualities of the Holy Prophet"

By Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}

English rendering of an Arabic poem

O my Heart! Remember Ahmad^{sa};¹ Source of guidance and annihilator of enemies

He is pious, kind and benevolent; An ocean of bounties and beneficence.

He is bright like the full moon; Praiseworthy in all his qualities.

His benevolence captures hearts; His beauty quenches the thirst.

The oppressors rejected him, So unjustly, and with such arrogance!

No one can deny the truth When it becomes manifest.

Go and find someone perfect like him; You will be humbled and bewildered.

We have not seen anyone like him Who so wakes up the sleeping ones.

He is the light of God that has resuscitated All branches of knowledge afresh.

He is elect, the chosen one; The guide, and the source or grace.

The rain of guidance is but a part Of the heavy rains of his generosity.

The world forgot its light drizzle,
When they saw the torrential rain from this leader.

Today the mean try to put outAnd extinguish the light of his guidance.

Sooner or later, Allah will manifest his light.

O rain that pours day and night, You have been safeguarded from destruction. You have nourished the trees of low lands And high lands with your bounties.

We have found you to be the heaven of refuge; Hence after finding such a great haven, We are no longer afraid of adverse circumstances, Nor are we scared of the horrors of any sword.

We fear not the vicissitudes of time; Nor are we frightened by threats.

At the time of every crisis, We turn to our Lord.

In many a contest,
Between me and the opposing hordes,
I emerged victorious, honored,
And a recipient of divine succor.

Praise be to Allah! Praise be to Him! As we have recognized our guide.

My friend! It is Allah indeed, Who has favored us with this gift.

He is the Night of Decree, Whose bounties are perennial.

¹ Ahmad was also the name of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him.

From the Archives

"What Would the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} Say to Chicago?"

1930—Third Quarter

A short lecture delivered by Sufi M. R. Bengalee on March 31, 1930, at the People's Church, Chicago, Ill., to a huge gathering of 2,500 people.

- 1. If Muhammad (Peace be upon him) were to come to Chicago, he would meet the people of this large city with his famous and joyous greeting, Assalamo Alaikum Peace be upon you. Thereby he would make an implied request to the people of Chicago to lay the solid foundation of peace and brotherhood, fellowship and friendship. Islam which means Peace Peace within and Peace without Peace with God and Peace with man that would be the keynote of his message.
- 2. Muhammad (Peace be on him) would ask all the people of Chicago to believe in and worship the one and the only God. It is not merely the lip profession. It is to live the life in conformity with the unity of God. He would ask Chicagoans to pray several times a day and strive to realize God as a helper in all their affairs and undertakings, thus establishing a permanent relationship with God resulting in the life of everlasting happiness and endless spiritual progress.
- 3. Muhammad (Peace be on him) would ask the people of Chicago to believe in the founders of all the religions. They were the common benefactors of mankind. One cannot be a Muslim without believing in Jesus, Moses, Krishna, Buddha and all other religious founders. He would ask Chicago people also to be ready to accept the divine reformers or spiritual guides who are to come in the future. One of these leaders has recently come in the person of the prophet, Ahmad, the Promised Messiah



Wrigley Building, Chicago 1930

Muhammad (Peace be on him) would ask each and every Chicagoan to help the poor and needy...

and Mahdi, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

4. Muhammad (Peace be on him) would ask the people of this great city to be truly democratic. Democracy lies not in theories and political institutions. Democracy lies in human conduct. Democracy lies in putting the principles of democracy into the life and action of society.

Muhammad (Peace be on him) would say: "Treat the colored people in a truly democratic spirit. Do not shut the doors of your churches, hotels, schools and homes against them. Let them enjoy freely all the privileges, which you possess. If they are poor, help them; if they are backward, uplift them, but for Heaven's sake, do not despise them.

Towards the foreigners too, Muhammad (Peace be on him) would ask the Chicagoans to be truly democratic. God is the God of the East and the West, of all countries and all peoples.

5. Muhammad (Peace be on him) would ask each and every Chicagoan to

help the poor and needy in any way he can – with money, with wisdom, influence and friendship.

*For every one hundred dollars which a man possesses beyond his actual needs, he should contribute no less than two dollars and a half or one-fortieth of his income every year to help the poor. Picture to your mind what a change it would bring to Chicago, if two and a half percent on every hundred dollars, out of the surplus money, would be collected from the well-to-do Chicagoans and invested towards relieving poverty. Let me hold before you the picture: The unemployment question would not exist and most of the sufferings of the poor would be wiped out.

6. Prohibition would emphatically be endorsed by Muhammad (Peace be on him). He would ask every Chicagoan to make the prohibition law a success. Just as oil and water cannot be mixed together, so also intoxicating drink and Islam cannot be joined together.

When Muhammad (Peace be on him) came to Arabia 1,350 years ago, the Arabian people were much more addicted to drink than are the people of Chicago now. Muhammad (Peace be on him) put his absolute veto on all intoxicants and never since then in a Muhammaden [Islamic] country has drinking been prevalent.

In short Muhammad (Peace be on him) would ask the people of this great metropolis to find happiness in the service of God and in the selfless service of man.

On the other hand, he would pay his strongest tribute to the tremendous progress, which Chicago has made. He would highly appreciate her spirit of tolerance, quest of knowledge and unparalleled achievements.

Footnote:

*This refers to the institution of Zakat, which is a tax of 2.5% per annum on the total wealth of the capitalists for the benefit of the poor. It is about this Zakat (poor tax) that Joseph Hell writes in his book, "The Arab Civilization": "Besides the common prayer, the conception of social equality was an innovation peculiar to Islam. Help and maintenance of the poor thus became a sacred trust. It was left no longer to individuals to give what they pleased, but the poor tax (Zakat) became an obligatory duty, and was collected in a central treasury, and administered therefrom." 1

Originally printed in the 8/9/07 edition of the *Hartford Advocate*

While I appreciate [Jennifer Abel's] enthusiasm in writing about [her] experience at the Mosque ["Culture Clash," Aug. 2], I encourage [her] to explore the concept of purdah as well. Men are encouraged to respect women with a high degree of honor. In the East, when a person respects another a great deal, they usually look down or away when speaking to that person, out of that respect. This is opposite to cultural habits of the West where respect is shown by looking at someone directly in the eye. Rest assured, the people of that Mosque did not mean any disrespect. Rather, they were honoring [the writer] in a way that I fully admit may seem strange. I apologize that [she was] made to feel uncomfortable and I would encourage [her] to continue to come to the mosque as making [her] uncomfortable would certainly not have been their intent. More than likely, it seems that some degree of a misunderstanding took place through no fault of anyone in particular. I am sure they too will express their sorrow that they put [her] in a seemingly compromising position.

As far as the role of women, I again assure you, it is not restricted to that of a wife, daughter, or mother. By looking at the very wives of the Prophet of Islam this is found to be an unfounded claim. Khadija, the Prophet's first wife, was a wealthy business owner, much respected by all Muslims alike. She was also the first person to accept Islam. Ayesha, another of the Prophet's wives, is recognized as one of the greatest scholars of Islamic history. Her abilities to teach and provide guidance to the Muslim ummah have been crucial to understanding Islam from a historical as well as theological standpoint. Islam gives women the right to hold political office, become a scientist, a doctor, a journalist, and, yes, even a housewife, mother, and daughter. If historical examples are not enough, here is a modern example. I am a Muslim and my own fiancé is completing her PhD in economics. Perhaps she will work for a university, perhaps for the United Nations, or perhaps for a major corporation. Perhaps she will become [a colleague] in journalism! The point is, Islam clearly gives her that choice.

Qasim Rashid, Chicago, Illinois



Ralph Whitmore, the town burgess, or mayor of Walkerville. Baltimore Sun Photo.

Originally printed in the 9/7/07 edition of the *Baltimore Sun*

Re: "Muslim sect causes stir in Walkersville" (Rona Marech, 8/30/07)

The tragic irony of the persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community is that its members represent the moderate brand of Islam astonishingly well. In the face of brutal persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, members of the Ahmadiyya Community advocate universal human rights, tolerance, and deliberation. They have condemned militant manifestations of Islam in vociferous terms.

Indeed, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Community, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, emphatically condemned any violence in the name of "jihad." His illuminating treatise on this subject, *British Government and Jihad* (1900), is a must read for all Americans interested in listening to a moderate Muslim voice ahead of his time.

The Ahmadiyya Community has set up schools, hospitals and welfare programs. members of the Ahmadiyya Community have built inter-religious coalitions against affronts to basic civil and religious liberties. Some estimates calculate that the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan, though only representing 3 percent of the country's total population, represent nearly 20 percent of its literate population.

Two of Pakistan's most respected personalities, Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, Pakistan's first foreign minister and the only person ever to serve as both the president of the UN General Assembly (1962-1963) and

president of the International Court of Justice (1970-1973), and Professor Abdus Salam, the first Pakistani Nobel laureate (Physics), were both members of the Ahmadiyya Community.

It is my sincere hope that Walkersville's residents embrace progressive Muslim minorities like the Ahmadiyya Community. This is the only way that commonalities between the West and Islam may be preserved in the presence of a militant perversion of Islam rather than be destroyed by it.

Amjad M. Khan, Esq. Los Angeles, California

Originally printed in the 10/18/07 edition of the *Maryland Gazette*

I have followed the controversy regarding the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's acquisition of the Walkersville property with interest.

We, as Americans, are a nation that believes in facts and not fears. The fact is that Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has an 87-year history of peaceful existence in United States. Men and women of this community serve in our hospitals, schools, philanthropic organizations and armed forces.

As far as the verses of Qur'an are concerned, let's ask them as to how they understand them. As a diverse nation, we have always solved tough issues by intellectual dialogue and finding common grounds. I hope that we do not base our decisions upon perceptions, doubts and suspicions.

Faheem Younus Qureshi, M.D. Baltimore, Maryland

Religious Freedom in Pakistan: Who is Truly Guilty of Religious Blasphemy?

By Naser-ud-Din Shams

International Religious Freedom Report commented on Pakistan's progress in protecting religious minorities. While this year's report indicated significant improvements in Pakistan, serious problems remain. The unresolved crisis questions whether Pakistan can uphold basic principles of Islam, much less understand them.

Background

Article 18 of the UN International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights states, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom...to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." It goes on to say, "No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice."

In upholding this universal right, the U.S. Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998. It established the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF Office) in the State Department and mandated the publication of the Annual Report on International Religious Freedom. The report documents abuses against the fundamental right to pick and practice one's faith – an inalienable right mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as, "There is no compulsion in matters of faith" (2:257). In essence, this report measures compliance to this elementary Islamic principle.

This year's International Religious Freedom Report was released September 14, 2007 by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.



Pakistan's influential orthodox clergy remain in denial, entertaining the self-deception that they are representing Islam. They fail to acknowledge that religions undergo a Divinely ordained survival of the fittest.

Overall Results

Although some progress was cited, particularly in women's rights, Pakistan is plagued by religious bigotry. Its laws discriminate against minority religions. Unless this fundamental issue is rectified, sectarian violence will claim more lives. The report cited numerous abuses which expose Pakistani legal enforcement as little more than a modern day witch hunt, rooted in personal jealousies and malice. The mob mentality fueled by the ignorant clerics, or mullahs, is highly effective in pressuring government authorities to persecute the very people they should protect. The report exposes the hypocrisy and double standards that have worked to undermine the value system of Pakistan.

Blasphemy Laws

Specifically, the anti-Ahmadiyya and blasphemy laws provide the death penalty for anyone who "defiles" Islam or its prophets (peace be upon them). Other penalties under the blasphemy laws are life imprisonment for defiling,

damaging, or desecrating the Qur'an, and a 10 year prison sentence for "insulting" another's religious feeling. Religion is documented on passports and national identity cards used to vote. Those desiring the designation of a Muslim must take an oath denouncing the Ahmadiyya Community's founder as a false prophet and his followers as non-Muslims. This effectively bars Ahmadi Muslims from performing the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (the *Hajj*). In addition, Ahmadis have opted to boycott elections rather than swear to an oath of hypocrisy to get their national identity cards.

The wording in the legal code has wide application to the extent Ahmadi Muslims can be imprisoned for saying the Muslim greeting, "Peace be upon you," (*As-Salaamu Alaikum*) – the crime being they are posing as Muslims. Unfortunately, the promulgators of Pakistani law seem to be unaware that this greeting was used by Christians centuries before Islam. The gospels state that Jesus (peace be upon him) greeted his disciples with "Peace be unto you" (Luke 24:36, John 20:19) and advised his followers likewise (Luke 10:5).

In addition, the Holy Qur'an states, "When greeted with a prayer, greet ye with a better prayer or *at least* return it" (4:87). However, the understanding of the *mullahs* deems it fit to respond with prison sentences.

Apostasy

Apostasy is punishable by death, but this is nowhere to be found in the Holy Qur'an. Misunderstandings exist because the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) had ordered the capital punishment for certain apostates. However, this punishment was only given in cases where the apostates were guilty of capital crimes. They were not executed for their apostasy.

It would be highly unlikely that a punishment worthy of death would have been omitted by a book as complete as the Qur'an (see 4:138, 3:87-90, and 47:26). Killing any non-Muslim because of faith, apostate or not, is tantamount to killing their opportunity to explore, repent and/or accept Islam — a burden which Muslims and *mullahs* should clearly understand before they carry it.

Social Prejudice

Aside from the explicit legal code, social prejudices run rampant in Pakistan. Minorities complained of discrimination in employment, benefits, and opportunities. A general sense of intolerance reigns as the norm.

Christians were also ruthlessly targeted. Churches were desecrated and Christians were intimidated by bigoted Muslims. Ironically, whereas the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) invited the Christians of Najran to pray in his own mosque, the bigoted *mullahs* of Pakistan won't allow Christians to pray in their own houses of worship. The Holy Qur'an encourages the defense of churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques wherein the name of God is glorified (22:41), but the Pakistani clergy allow themselves to do the opposite.

Pakistan's law suppresses the preaching and discussion of viewpoints differing from mainstream Islam. However, this is contrary to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, which encourage open dialogue and freedom of speech. The Qur'an states, "Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them in a way that is best" (16:126). Unfortunately, this verse has no application in Pakistan because differing view-

Discrimination by State

The gravest act of discrimination by the State against a specific group took the form of laws that barred Ahmadis from freely practising their faith, from calling themselves Muslim and from preaching their faith.

Early in 2006, the Punjab Housing and Town Planning Agency, a public sector body, advertised the auction of plots for low-income earners in newspapers in the Jhang area. A note in the auction notice barred Ahmadis from participating in the bidding. An affadavit as to religious belief was handed out at the bidding, and anyone taking part required to sign it. The notice banning Ahmadis from buying land had also been pasted on walls in Chiniot and Rabwah (renamed Chenabnagar by the Punjab government).

Ahmadi shops were attacked in Rahimyar Khan in February, during protests against cartoons perceived by most Muslims as blasphemous, which had been published in a Danish newspaper.

In April, local authorities in Kasur dug up the grave of an Ahmadi girl, Nadia Hanif, 17, buried in a Muslim graveyard, ten days after her death and moved her body to an Ahmadi cemetery under pressure from local extremist elements.

Ahmadis were for all practical purposes barred from voting. The listing of the community on a separate voting list, which effectively categorized them as non-Muslims, led Ahmadis to boycott local government polls held at the end of 2005. While the government maintained a joint electorate had been restored, in practice separate lists were usually maintained for non-Muslims. In some cases, separate polling stations were allotted to them, thus largely defeating the purpose of a joint electorate by keeping minorities marginalized.

The State promoted violence by failing to act against those attacking non-Muslims or their properties [See sections on Ahmadis, Christians and Hindus.]

The voices that as usual prevailed. Blasphemy laws, which provided the death penalty for defiling the name of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and life imprisonment for defiling, damaging or desecrating the Holy Quran, were used against non-Muslims – although the number of instances in which they were abused to settle petty scores with other Muslims had risen sharply over the past years.

Photo and article, courtesy of www.thepersecution.org

points have been silenced by force.

As for retaliating against blasphemous remarks, the Holy Qur'an has a simple solution – leave and find better company. This is the only punishment mentioned in the Qur'an (see 4:141, 6:69, and 6:109).

Conclusion

Pakistan's influential orthodox clergy remain in denial, entertaining the self-deception that they are representing Islam. They fail to acknowledge that religions undergo a Divinely ordained survival of the fittest. Only those philosophies which satisfy the nature of humankind will survive and spiritually procreate into new members.

Pakistan's discriminatory laws bear testi-

mony to the religious clergy's inability to meet the challenges of our time, and their failure to spread Islam on its own merits. Their inadequacies and ignorance have resulted in the need to coerce minorities – as if they're advertising their fears that Islam cannot compete with invading philosophies. Pakistan needs to wake up to the fact that those accusing others of blasphemy are themselves guilty of that very crime – a realization as embarrassing as it is ironic.

As has always been the case in the past, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's resources are available and willing to help the people of Pakistan form a true Islamic Republic which will stand with dignity and respect in the demanding court of international opinion.

News, Views and Reviews

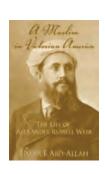
Islam in America,Muhammad Alexander Russell

Webb (Magribine Press 2006)

Reviewed by Bilal Rana

slam in America & Other Writings by Muhammad Alexander Russell Webb, published in 2006 by Magribine Press, is new publication of the writings of one of the first converts to Islam in America.

Webb initiated study circles for Is-



lamic learning in several major United States cities and publish the first Islamic journal, *The Moslem World*, which did not see more than several issues in print. In addition, he served as the Turkish emissary to the United States, and in 1887, he was appointed by

President Grover Cleveland as United States Consul in the Philippines. In essence, he was fully American and a fully devoted Muslim at the same time. He was a man of social statue in the public sphere of lie, as a quintessential American in post-Civil War United States – this is hard to match even today among the Muslims in America a century later. His father was a well-known journalist and editor of the New York's *Hudson Daily Star*.

This gracefully written text was first published in the late Nineteenth Century. It is as compelling and engaging today as it must have been in the era of Victorian America in which it was first published. Webb's writing is soulful, intelligent, articulate and confident. This new edition begins with two biographical sketches of Webb's life, one written by the publishers, and the other written about Webb during his own lifetime. It also includes other writings, including pamphlets which he wrote for propagation It is as important a work as any that collects classics in American Islamic literature.

Webb draws lessons
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while "no religious
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than the Christian."

Webb's central aim was to break away from "soul-destroying religious superstitions" that had crept into the American way of spiritual life, which he characterized as "passive belief" into doctrines "contrary to reason and commonsense." He sets out to encourage Americans to consider seriously a "calm and unprejudiced investigation of Islam." Raised a Presbyterian Christian, Webb was told by his church that his questions regarding the trinity and salvation in Christianity were "mysteries" and "beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals."

Webb draws lessons from history, citing that while "no religious system can fairly be judged by the acts and expressions of all its professed followers," nevertheless historically Muslims will still "show a cleaner moral record and higher spiritual perceptions than the Christian." Regarding the allegations against Muslims engaging in Holy War, he concedes: "So far as blood-stains are concerned, I hardly believe that Islam has any reason to blush when she compares her garments with those of Christianity."

Webb argues forthrightly that Christianity began with St. Paul, while "the dogma of the trinity was invented by the Bishop of Antioch 300 years after the death of Jesus, and that the latter never

taught it and never heard of it." He says Muhammad "taught no new religious system, but sought to revive that one eternal truth . . . His claim was neither more nor less than that made by Jesus, who never claimed to be God, in the sense in which some misguided people believe he did." He cites John 8:58: "Jesus said unto them, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, I am what Abraham was before me;" that is to say, an inspired Prophet like Abraham."

Extolling the beauties of Islam, Webb continues: "But its chief beauty, viewed superficially, is its perfect adaptability to the spiritual needs of all classes of humanity, from the humblest laborer to the most advanced thinker and man of letters. There is nothing in it that does violence to reason or common sense, or that is in any degree contrary to the natural instincts of justice and mercy."

Webb gives a splendid philosophical exposition on the practice of fasting and its effect on the body and soul, as well as the Holy Pilgrimage to Mecca. He devotes an entire chapter to "Polygamy and Purdah," contending that many social evils rampant in American and European civilizations are rarely found in Islamic countries where pure Islam is practiced

Webb's concise and powerful exposition of the inner beauties of Islam is perhaps the book's most significant asset. For example, he describes the Islamic system as "the most perfect system of soul-development ever given to man, and the only one applicable to all the classes of humanity." He further comments: "[T]he essence of the true faith of Islam is resignation to the will of God, and its cornerstone is prayer. It teaches universal fraternity, universal love, and universal benevolence, and requires purity of mind, purity of action, purity of speech and perfect physical cleanliness. It is the simplest and most elevating form of religion known to man."

Webb's profound insights provide a lens by which to examine the impact of Islam on American society. This new publication will undoubtedly serve as a crucial addition to the burgeoning scholarship on the historical roots of Islam in America.



Does verse 29 of chapter three of the Qur'an prevent social and political integration with Christians and other non-Muslims?

The import of 3:29 is that alliances not be made with non-Muslims in a way that may harm the interests of other Muslims. Verses 60:9 and 60:10 shed more light on this subject:

"Allah forbids you not respecting those who have not fought against you on account of your religion, and who have not driven you out from your homes, that you be kind to them and deal equitably with them; surely Allah loves those who are equitable." (60:9)

"Allah only forbids you respecting those who have fought against you on account of your religion and have driven you out of your homes, and have helped others in driving you out, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them - it is these that are the transgressors." (60:10)

These verses clearly do not apply to political conflict; they apply only to specific religious conflicts. If something like this had been mentioned in the Old Testament perhaps the Nazis would not have been able to elicit the help of some Jews in rounding up other Jews.

Why should we believe that Qur'an is the word of God?

Fortunately the Qur'an itself is the greatest proof of its own authenticity.

It speaks about the creation of the Universe (Big Bang): "Do not the disbe-

lievers see that the heavens and the Earth were a closed-up mass, then We clove them asunder? And We made of water every living thing." (21:31)

It speaks about the expanding universe: "The heavens We have built with power. Verily We are expanding it." (51:48)

It speaks about the orbital motion of the sun and the moon: "And He it is Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, each gliding along smoothly in its orbit." (21:34)

Fifteen centuries ago no man could have made up these verses, and many others like it. Long before he became a prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) was known among his people as the "truthful" and the "trustworthy."

If your contention is that the state of Muhammad's^{sa} power is not at issue due to the fact that it is God's words, not Muhammad's^{sa}, I will say 'while God may speak, it is still being heard by human ears which are prone to hear what they most wish to hear.'

Referring to Prophet Muhammad^{sa} the Old Testament says, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee. And put my words in his; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deut. 18:18-19)

And Jesus^{as} said "How be it when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak for himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak and he will show you things to come, he shall glorify me." (John 16:12-14)

The Qur'an states:

"And in accordance with the requirements of truth and wisdom We have sent it down, and with truth and wisdom has it descended. And we have sent thee only as a bearer of good tidings and a Warner." (17:106)

Scriptures from three different religions are testifying that a truthful person has the capacity to relay exactly what he hears.

Why were three Christians murdered in Turkey for hiding bibles in their house? Why would they have to hide them to begin with? Why did Saudi Arabia reaffirm that any non-Muslim religious objects, including the Star of David, be strictly forbidden in the country?

As Ahmadi Muslims we believe that any kind of coercion based on religion is un-Islamic.

The Qur'an speaks of the Torah and the Bible as revealed books and repeatedly draws our attention to the prophecies contained in them. How could it be un-Islamic to own these books?

"Surely, We sent the Torah wherein was guidance and light. By it did the Prophets, who were obedient to Us, judge for the Jews, as did the godly people and those learned in the Law; because they were required to preserve the Book of Allah, and because they were guardians over it." (5:45)

"And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel which contained guidance and light, fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah; and a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing." (5:47)

It goes on to promise salvation to everyone who is true to his/her own set of beliefs.

"Surely, those who believe and the Jews and the Christians and the Sabians - whichever party from among these truly believes in God, and the Last Day, and does good deeds, shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve." (2:63)◆

Go online and ask your questions at www.muslimsunrise.com





Andrew Gomez of the Zion Benton Township High School presents students with the *Bilal - Rising above the Rest* scholarships at a Black History Program sponsored by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Zion. Photo: Hasan Hakeem

The Muslim Sunrise interviews noteworthy personalities from the U.S. and abroad, to learn about their background, beliefs and contribution to society.

In this issue, we sat with Andrew Gomez of the Zion Benton Township High School located in Zion, IL USA.

Muslim Sunrise: Tell us a little about yourself, your background, and what you do.

Andrew Gomez: For the past sixteen years I have been teaching history here at Zion-Benton Township High School [ZBTHS]. I have also served as sponsor of the ZBTHS Multicultural Student Organization called "Shades" for the past ten years.

MS: Why did you select this career path?

Gomez: Being a teacher was really the only serious career choice I ever had. I would say that I was motivated in this direction by the teachers and coaches that I had grown up with. They did their jobs with enthusiasm and humor; they worked very hard but yet always had time for the kids.

MS: Are you involved in any community service or extracurricular activities?

Gomez: In the past I have participated on various culture-based committees and even political action committees from the area. Currently, a great deal of my time is devoted to being President of the non-profit

organization "Partners Across The Ocean". This grew from a school to school partnership with a South African high school and is now emerging into an organization seeking to improve the overall education of students in the impoverished townships of South Africa. It is an all-volunteer organization connecting community members and teachers in this effort. In the past we have organized two teacher training trips, built two computer laboratories and brought three exchange students to Zion for their education. Currently, those students are being assisted in their university expenses back in South Africa. It has been quite a story in partnership wrapping together individuals, service organizations, businesses and the local Rotary Club into this partnership. The Shades organization has also been heavily involved and often our high school kids are the most determined to make a difference.

I also am working on an Alliance of Africanthemed non-profit organizations, based in this area to do an awareness program or perhaps even organize mutual projects in South Africa in the future.

At school the Shades organization has been a big part of my routine. I also am the Public Address Announcer for football and basketball games. Previously I coached basketball for sixteen years but have taken time off lately for my family.

MS: Members of the Zion chapter of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community have known you for several years and have seen your dedication to the community, particularly young adults. What motivates you?

Gomez: It would have to be my two best teachers, my mom and my dad. They each had their own "causes" they were involved in and spent time helping others, usually in a very anonymous capacity. My mother for many years ran a clothing distribution center for Native Americans residing on the various reservations of South Dakota. She spent hours collecting give away clothing, mending and washing them and arranging various pick ups when people needed clothes for whatever reasons...maybe job interviews or school needs, whatever was pressing for them.

My Dad was in a variety of service organizations like the Lions' Club and the Knights of Columbus. He also read books into a tape player that were then mass copied and distributed to the blind—this was before you could buy "books on tape" like you can today. In his retirement years he has volunteered himself as a museum curator for at least ten years. In the case of both parents this was always in addition to their regular jobs. Both in some capacity worked in State government. My Dad was an administrator and political campaign advisor. My mother was primarily a housewife but worked when the State Legislature was in session.

MS: What do you dream of accomplishing in life and do you think you'll be successful? Why or why not?

Gomez: Hmm, not an easy question to answer...I would say, especially in light of my connection to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and its goals and values, that we, and I can't say "I," as all of this is completed in partnership, that the hope is that young people will see each other as equals - that we will erase some of the intolerance of our world extended to those who are different.

I have a lot of hope in our young people that they will rise above some of the bars of intolerance and prejudice that have been laid out for them. And it's not a community problem, it's a world problem. I also hope that we have taught them to think of others, to reach out to those who are less fortunate and provide the assistance that they can, whatever that might be. You might say that we have tried to replicate the African concept of "Ubuntu" in some ways here in Zion. The idea that we are all interconnected, that we only become who we are through other people and because of others, not in spite of others. I think that's an excellent model for the whole world. When I see the students get excited about a project helping people they'll never know, making someone breathe a bit easier, it does makes me proud.

MS: How did you first come in contact with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community? Describe some of the interactions you've had with us.

Gomez: Most of my connections with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community have been related to our Shades Club activities. I believe it was in 2001 when the organization began an annual Black History Month program. I was recruited by Zakee Darr to organize a group of Zion-Benton students to present at the event. I was happy to do so and we have attended and participated in every program by the group since. It's interesting to see how these programs have evolved over the years as well. For example at the 2006 program the AMC presented five scholarships to welldeserving Zee-Bee students.

We also worked in partnership with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC) in 2003 to host a holistic program, "Girl Talk"; my young ladies still discuss this event today when they come back to visit. Also in 2002, we participated in the "Youth for Truth" Summit and hosted by the Muslim community and held at ZBTHS. I had students on the panel for discussion and enjoyed hearing all of the different viewpoints. We also had the chance in 2005 to thank the AMC for their efforts when we nominated them for a community excellence award, presented by our Board of Education. I was pleased when the nomination was accepted. Lastly, the AMC, either by individual or in mass, have always been in attendance at our events or even presented scholarships.

MS: Based on your observations, what opportunities exist to strengthen the city of Zion, and how can organizations like the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community help?

Gomez: A city needs its spiritual organizations because they bring people together allowing you to get a message across. They also provide you foot

soldiers to make a program happen. Currently in Zion we have many dedicated community-based groups; we have elected governmental officials interested in positive change and unifying the city all at the same time. We have to use this opportunity to make those changes; especially in regards to programs uplifting and providing opportunities for the young people of this area...the time is now.

MS: What if anything would you say to the international Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and its leadership?

Gomez: Thank you, stated simply. I might also add that I have noticed and appreciated your various campaigns to raise public awareness. We all realize that September 11th exposed the gap of knowledge that Americans have for the Muslim faith. I have seen successful events both locally and internationally that you have championed which serve to put a human face on the Muslim community. This is absolutely crucial, hard work, but so important. I also appreciate the commitment that this program has had for youth. High school age young men and women don't always realize or appreciate what has been done for them by community focused groups. It then becomes necessary that we as adults who perhaps see a broader picture point this out. The scholarships awarded are my point here. We are proud in our Shades organization that every officer in our existence has received a university scholarship after high school. This is simply not possible without your organization that recognizes kids regardless of grade point average or religious faith or any other qualification. We can have students with vision, with academic skill and ambition, but if they lack the financial backing for further education their talents will be ill-used and their future possibilities limited. Some of the students you have honored have been outstanding; others have been those whom a normal scholarship program would overlook and not be willing to take a chance on.

So, as I said, I would just like to say, "Thank you," very simply.

Perspectives

was never a parade freak. I did go to a few Columbus Day parades when I could stand in the cold without catching one. It wasn't because I was a fan of Columbus. Although, he should be honored for being the "new dealer" of them all. He started out not knowing where he was headed, and going back, didn't know where he had been. The most wonderful part was that he did it all with someone else's money. I just thought the Columbus Day parade was better than most of them. Going to see a parade is wonderful. You see all the people cheering and clapping. I am sure the loudest of them are the paper and balloon business owners.

The big drawback to see a parade is that you have to get there on time. Once you miss a part of it, you have to wait a whole year to see it again. We many windows get opportunities in our lives. Once we miss them, like the parade, we have to wait a very long time to see them open again. Sometimes they never reopen. It's no different than when you get too old to stand in the cold for six hours to see youngsters dancing on the deck of a paper ship.



In Medina, a man named Thaluba used to come from a nearby valley to visit the Holy Prophet^{saw}. I'll tell you the story of how he missed his window of opportunity.

Everyday, he would walk and get to Medina about noon prayer time. He would say his *Zuhr* (middle day) prayer and converse with the Holy Prophet^{saw} and others. He would go back to his valley after the afternoon (*Asr*) prayer. One day he asked the Holy Prophets^{saw} to pray for him that he would become a rich man. The Holy Prophet^{saw} said to him, "Thaluba, why do you want to become rich? You know that it is much easier to fulfill your obligation when you are poor

as compared to when you are rich?" He kept on insisting that the Holy Prophet^{saw} pray for him to get rich.

The Holy Prophet saw took another approach with him. He said, "Why don't you follow my example? I live a very simple life. You know, if I were to ask God to make the hills of Medina turn into gold and silver, he would do that for me. But, I don't ask for that." Thaluba was still not convinced. He kept on repeating his request.

The Holy Prophet^{saw} told him he would get in trouble if he were to become rich because he might not be able to fulfill his obligations to Allah. Thaluba said, "O Prophet of Allah, I swear in the name

We have to be on watch for our windows of opportunity. We have got to step up to the plate at the right time.

of Allah when I become rich, I will fulfil all my obligations to Allah and His Prophet." Finally the Holy Prophet^{saw} gave up and told him that he would pray for him.

In the normal course of business, Thaluba bought a few goats. These particular goats started multiplying like gnats in the rainy season. In a very short time his valley was goats wall to wall. Thaluba was a rich man.

Managing a business always takes time. Even the goat business back then was a time consuming proposition. You needed to hire people to milk them, deliver the milk to surrounding areas, collect the money, clean the stalls and keep the boss happy. You need to do the payroll for your employees and maintain controls over all phases of the business. I didn't even mention the subsidiary that had to handle the goats to be sold to the butchers. That's another bloody business to be controlled and monitored.

Thaluba was a rich man now but also a busy one. He started skipping Zuhr prayers. After a while, he could only come to the Prophet's Mosque on Fridays, for Jumah prayers. The pressures of business had gotten to Thaluba and he started to offer his Jumah prayers in his valley as well. Parts of the Holy Prophet^{saw}'s fears were already coming to pass.

The Holy Prophet^{saw} would occasionally ask others about Thaluba. They would tell him that he was too busy with his business now. The Holy Prophet^{saw} would show his disappointment that Thaluba had gotten himself in trouble. He did not have the blessings of saying prayers in the company of the Holy Prophet^{saw}. He exchanged it for the money he had wished for.

One year, the Holy Prophet^{saw} sent two people as collectors to neighboring towns with written instructions. Fixed rates were listed for Zakat that was required of a Muslim and it was an option to give other things in charity as they pleased. The Holy Prophet^{saw} instructed them to be sure to go to Thaluba and another person from the Abee Saleem tribe because Allah had blessed both of them with wealth.

The collectors stopped at Thaluba's valley because it was the closest to Medina and told him about the instructions of the Holy Prophet^{saw}. He looked at the Zakat rates and remarked that it looked like some kind of tax system. He said to them, "Why don't you go to other villages. On the way back, you can stop here. I would have made up my mind by then."

The collectors visited other villages and collected contributions. They visited the person of Abee Saleem tribe and gave him the message. He not only gave according to the rates but also selected the best camels and sheep he had and gave them as charity. He was that grateful to Allah. Even the collectors felt embarrassed while accepting the best of his cattle. On the way back, they stopped at Thaluba's valley.

Thaluba had made up his mind. He said he could not give anything this year but they should check with him the following year. The collectors came back and related everything to the Holy Prophet^{saw}. Once again he felt sorry for Thaluba and the trouble he had gotten himself into.

At each Jumah, it was the practice of the Holy Prophet^{saw} to recite the newly revealed verses of the Holy Qur'an. At one Jumah, the verses he announced are part of the Surah Tauba (chapter nine):

"And among them are those who made a covenant with Allah, saying, 'If He give us of His bounty, we would most surely give alms and be of the virtuous. But when He gave them of His bounty, they became niggardly of it, and they

turned away in aversion."

Thaluba, of course, was not there, but one of his relatives was. He figured that these verses fit Thaluba exactly. So after Jumah prayers, he went to see Thaluba.

This relative told Thaluba that the situation had now exceeded all limits. Even verses of the Holy Qur'an are being revealed about him. Thaluba knew he messed up. So he took a few camels, goats and other goods and came to Medina to see the Holy Prophet^{saw}. He said that he felt ashamed and he would like to give charity and Zakat.

That's when he got the bombshell of his life.

The Holy Prophet^{saw} said, "Allah has commanded me not to accept any charity from you."

Thaluba insisted and begged but there was no way that the Holy Prophet^{saw} was going to disobey Allah's instructions. Thaluba left to go back to his valley in despair. The window of opportunity had been closed.

We too get opportunities like that in our lives. We are asked to participate in a mosque-building project. If we don't, the parade is gone and we don't know when we will see the next one. The worst thing is that a point may come when Allah rejects anything we offer in His cause. The Holy Prophet^{saw} is not physically among us to inform us of such a time, but we know from the above story that it can happen, and how. We have to be on watch for our windows of opportunity. We have got to step up to the plate at the right time.

In case you are wondering, Thaluba tried to offer charity to Hadhrat Abu Bakr when he became Khalifa, then to Hadhrat Omar and then Hadhrat Usman. Their answers were the same: If the Holy Prophet^{saw} didn't accept it, who are we to? Thaluba died in Hadhrat Usman's time.

I don't care if you like the Columbus Day or Rose Bowl parades. Just make sure you show up on time.

Yes, you can watch the parade on TV, but no matter what you say, it is not the real McCoy. -- Falahud Din Shams



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